CEN
CENTER for EDUCATIONAL NETWORKING

Effective Ideas for Improving the Educational Performance of Students with Disabilities

NewsLine

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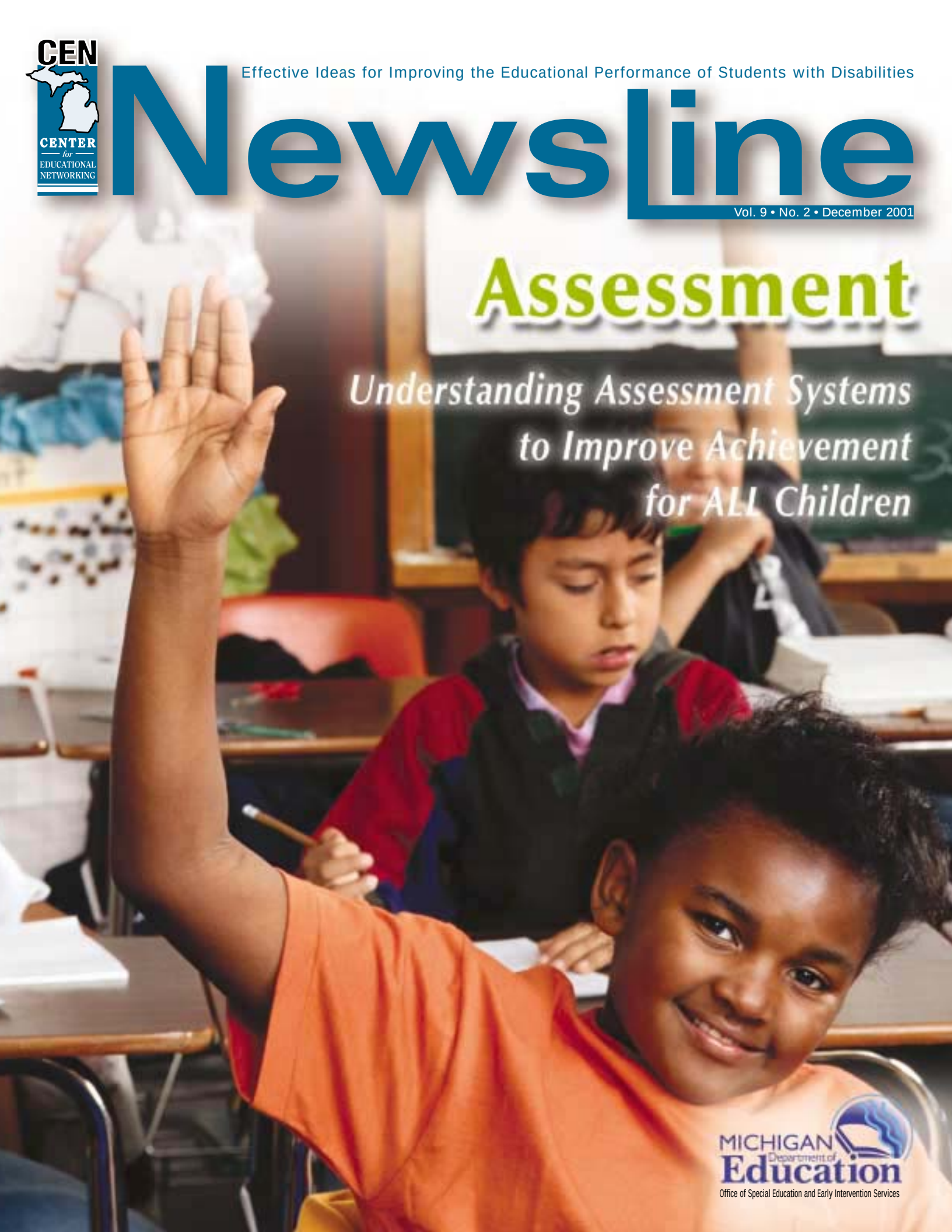
Assessment

Understanding Assessment Systems to Improve Achievement for ALL Children



MICHIGAN Department of Education
Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services

Assessment is the systematic gathering of evidence to judge a student's demonstration of learning. Assessment aids educational decision making by securing valid and reliable information to indicate whether students have learned what is expected. Assessment is built around multiple indicators and sources of evidence including tests, combinations of performances, products, etc.

—Michigan Curriculum Framework

Newsline
Michigan Department of Education (MDE)
Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services (OSE/EIS)
Director: Jacquelyn J. Thompson, Ph.D.
Project Manager: Frank E. Rowell, M.A.

CEN Staff
Project Director: Donald A. Burke, Ed.D.
Associate Project Director: Linda A. Lynch
Editor: Holly Spence Sasso, M.A.
Communication Specialist: Lori Schulze
Program Assistants: Teri Bullock, Aimee Cain, Annette Gorden, Robin Wolever
Writer: Shirley A. Beckman
Contributing Writers:
Kathy Bradford
Peggy Dutcher
Stephen N. Elliott
Thomas R. Guskey
Sheila A. Potter
Marcia Radin
Jennifer Rogers
Deb Russell
Sue Severson
Faith Stevens
Phoebe C. Winter

Graphic Design: Trillium Graphic Design, Mason, MI

State Board of Education
Kathleen N. Straus, President
Sharon L. Gire, Vice President
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Marianne Yared McGuire, NASBE Delegate
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Ex Officio Members
John Engler, Governor
Thomas D. Watkins, Jr., Superintendent of Public Instruction

Direct all inquiries to:
CEN *NEWSLINE*
Eaton Intermediate School District
1790 East Packard Highway
Charlotte, MI 48813
(800) 593-9146 #6
(517) 541-1318 #6
(517) 321-6101 #6
(517) 541-1351 fax
hss@eaton.k12.mi.us

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On our Cover...

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Editor

Holly Spence Sasso

Terms like assessment and data can conjure up unpleasant memories of less than perfect test results, unfair evaluations, or the mere pressure and stress related to the assessment and data collection process in general. As an educator, you may have asked yourself, "What now?" after the assessment and data collection process is finished. As a parent, you may be wondering why so much time is spent assessing your child. Is the assessment appropriate and fair, and what happens with the assessment data after the test?

In this issue of *Newsline,* a number of experts share their perspectives in an effort to shine a positive light on the assessment process, answer some of your questions, and help you understand how Michigan's Educational Assessment System (MEAS) works. You'll find articles with information about strategies for improving assessment for ALL students, how assessments can lead to better teaching and learning, and how being an active participant in the assessment process can benefit children and families.

If the assessment concept seems daunting, begin with the glossary of terms on page 11 and read about the steps Michigan is taking to increase student achievement and changes underway for MEAS on page 6, "Michigan's Assessments Include ALL Students." On page 28, you'll find additional resources for further reading.

The *Michigan Special Education Directory 2001-2002* is now available for purchase through the Center for Educational Networking (CEN). The directory is an excellent resource for special education stakeholders. You'll find an order form inside this issue of *Newsline.* Also, remember to share *Newsline* with your colleagues and friends. If you haven't already done so during this school year, please complete the subscription form located on the insert of this issue.

Happy Holidays!

The Center for Educational Networking (CEN) is a project awarded by the Michigan Department of Education to Eaton Intermediate School District (EISD). *NEWSLINE* is produced by CEN for OSE/EIS through a PL 105-17, *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act,* state discretionary project grant. Contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Michigan Department of Education or Eaton ISD, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement. Some photographs are used solely for graphic presentation and do not necessarily represent individuals with disabilities. This information is in the public domain unless otherwise indicated. Readers are encouraged to copy and share articles, but proper credit must be given.

Director OSE/EIS

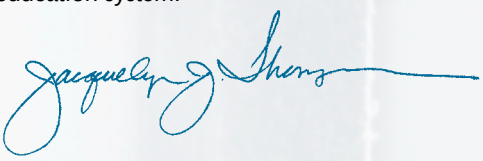
Jacquelyn J. Thompson, Ph.D.

Access to the general curriculum is a major concept in the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA). It brings attention to what is taught and what is learned. Assessment is part of this equation. When the mandate to educate students with disabilities was first enacted, the focus was on the right to access the public school system. The current attention to what teachers teach, and what students learn elevates the level of expectation for the results of this access. Assessment is one of the key components for measuring the results.

State assessment systems are required in federal law, not only in the IDEA, but also in the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) under Title 1. The focus is on ALL students being assessed and ALL students making progress each school year. Recognizing this, the State Board of Education recently adopted a policy on assessment for ALL students. This policy is presented on page 7.

For many students who receive special education services, the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP), or the MEAP with accommodations, is an appropriate assessment mechanism. While no single assessment is adequate to fully measure a student's knowledge or ability, state assessments provide one element of a meaningful assessment plan. For students with significant cognitive challenges, the MI-Access has been developed as a new part of the Michigan Educational Assessment System (MEAS).

This edition of *Newsline* is constructed to provide basic information on the importance of assessment and to share perspectives on approaches to assessment, including the importance of a state assessment system. I encourage you to share this issue with your colleagues and use it to stimulate a better understanding of the role assessment plays in a quality education system.



Guest Editor

Peggy Dutcher, Consultant,
Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services, and
Project Director, MI-Access

Assessment Systems:
Why They Are Important

Assessments and assessment systems are important for a variety of reasons, but the most important is that educators and parents should never base their decisions about student progress on one source of data. To accurately determine whether a student is progressing, every district and school should have a variety of formal and informal assessments from which to draw information.

Formal assessments include the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP), Michigan's Alternate Assessment (MI-Access), or other nationally published standardized assessments such as the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, the Brigance Achievement Assessment, Work Keys, and assessments appropriate for English language learners. Informal assessments include planned and organized teacher observations, daily classroom assessments, teacher logs and journal entries, parent input and observations, and running records.

These formal and informal assessments comprise an assessment system that draws important student information from a variety of sources. The input obtained from these sources can then be used daily to make informed decisions about how to help ALL students learn and succeed.

For an assessment system to be effective it must include the following two components. First, it must reflect teacher and parent expectations for students. Once teachers and parents decide upon the curriculum that they want students to learn, teachers need to design relevant assessment systems to measure whether or not students are learning as intended. Second, an assessment system must provide meaningful assessment opportunities for ALL students. Every student is important. Each deserves to be counted in Michigan's accountability system, and each is entitled to effective mechanisms for appropriately measuring individual progress. The Michigan Educational Assessment System (MEAS) is an effective assessment system that ensures that ALL students are included. Local district and school assessment systems must reflect Michigan's inclusive philosophy as well.

In addition, districts and schools are accountable for ALL students, including those with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELL). For that reason, educators must have tools to effectively evaluate programs and review progress. Creating assessment systems that have varied and appropriately-designed tests for diverse student populations is one important way schools and districts can obtain the information they need to determine progress for ALL students.

For more information, contact:
Peggy Dutcher, Michigan Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services
P.O. Box 30008, Lansing, MI 48909
(517) 373-0923, 373-7504 fax
dutcherp@michigan.gov

Editor's Note:
Peggy Dutcher is someone you should know from the Michigan Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services. Peggy's contributions to this issue of Newsline testify to her expertise in the area of assessment and alternate assessment. Peggy came to Michigan from her home state of Illinois in 1974. She has been involved in the area of educational assessment for the past 25 years in a variety of different capacities. Peggy taught human anatomy at and provided assessment and evaluation expertise to the Michigan State University College of Osteopathic

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Standards-Based Systems Focus on Improving Student Learning

Multiple Measures of Achievement Give States the Best Results

Phoebe C. Winter, Project Director, State Education Assessment Center, Council of Chief State School Officers

Increasingly, state and local education agencies are building standards-based systems of education. Standards-based systems focus on improving student learning in relation to well-defined academic content and performance expectations. A critical component in this effort is measuring how well schools are educating their students to attain these standards. Virtually every state has developed academic content and performance standards and measures designed to provide information about student performance in relation to the standards. The measurement information relates to predefined levels of proficiency, such as "advanced," "proficient," and "partially proficient" achievement of the standards. The measurement instruments measure achievement in a variety of content areas at a number of grade levels.

An important characteristic of good assessment systems is the use of multiple measures of student achievement that are aligned with academic content standards. The most recent reauthorization of Title I of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* included a requirement that states develop assessments aligned with their academic content standards in reading/language arts and mathematics. Title I also required that state assessment systems incorporate multiple measures of student performance. Clearly, the 1994 revisions to Title I have proven to be the driving force behind the use of aligned multiple measures in assessing and making judgments about student academic proficiency levels. However, using aligned multiple measures is acknowledged as the best measurement practice.

Multiple measures of achievement should be used to get the best possible information about how well students and schools are performing. It is almost always necessary to use a variety of measures and tasks to assess the full range of academic content standards and to measure the different types of knowledge and skill represented by those standards—that is, to use an assessment system that is aligned with content standards. Moreover, having more than one measure can contribute to the reliability and validity of the results and to the fairness of the decisions based on the results. States can use multiple measures to:

1. Increase the match of the assessment system with content and performance standards.

The emphasis on high academic standards and higher order thinking makes it unlikely that a single approach to assessment within a content area will adequately cover the knowledge and skills embodied in content and performance standards. Multiple approaches and measures can improve the degree to which the assessment system measures the range of content standards and the depth of content described in performance standards.

2. Increase the validity of student-level and school-level results.

Alignment is a necessary condition for valid (well-grounded) standards-based testing. For example, proficiency in science might be defined by state content standards as both knowledge of critical scientific facts and the ability to use the scientific process to test hypotheses and understand reports of scientific findings. An assessment consisting only of questions about facts or questions about the scientific process would yield less valid results than one that also required students to design an experiment and critique a newspaper article reporting on a new finding. The second set of measures, which is more closely aligned to the content standards, would allow the user to make a more valid inference about a student's standing in relation to the entire set of content standards.

3. Increase the reliability and fairness of student-level results.

The use of multiple assessment measures has the potential to increase reliability of results. Employing multiple measures increases the number of items or tasks used to produce the results and increases the scope of content covered. Multiple measures involve the use of multiple instruments and formats. As a result, the measurement items and tasks can include greater variation in difficulty levels and thus elicit different types of responses. Allowing for multiple ways for students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills and for a range of responses increases the likelihood of obtaining good measures of what each student knows and can do.

4. Increase the likelihood that schools will provide instruction in critical content areas and in the variety of skills reflected in content and performance standards.

If one purpose of the assessment is to influence what content is covered in schools and how it is covered, then it is important that the measures represent the breadth and depth of the content. Research has shown that instruction is influenced by what is tested and by how it is tested when assessment results are used to make important decisions. If a single approach is used to measure student proficiency in a content area, it is likely that instruction will focus on the content that is measured by that approach. Likewise, if the assessment system measures a subset of content standards, it is likely that the tested content will be the focus of instruction and that instruction will be more comprehensive.

The results of assessment of student performance are likely to become the basis of even more important decisions about educational systems over the next few years. For example, assessment systems must be aligned with state goals and incorporate appropriate types of measures for accurate alignment of instruction with assessment.

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is a nationwide, nonprofit organization composed of public officials who lead the departments responsible for elementary and secondary education in the states, the U.S. extra-state jurisdictions, the District of Columbia, and the Department of Defense Education activity. In representing the chief education officers, CCSSO works on behalf of the state agencies that serve pre K-12 students throughout the nation.

For more information, contact:
Phoebe C. Winter, Project Director
State Education Assessment Center
Council of Chief State School Officers
2319 Traymore Rd., Richmond, VA 23235
(804) 272-0996, (804) 272-0677 fax
pwinter123@aol.com, www.ccsso.org

Including Students with Disabilities in Assessments Is Critical for Improving Opportunities

Stephen N. Elliott, University of Wisconsin-Madison and Council for Exceptional Children Online Learning Program Instructor

Reprinted from CEC Today, *September 2001, Council for Exceptional Children*

Including students with disabilities in standardized assessments is critical to improving educational opportunities for these students as well as to providing meaningful and useful information about their performance to their schools and communities. However, including students with disabilities in standardized assessments also raises questions about the appropriateness of performance standards for this population, what accommodations to use, the effects of accommodations on the validity of assessment, and the reporting of scores when accommodations have been used.

Despite these concerns, including all students in educational accountability systems is an important and attainable goal. Using testing accommodations wisely can increase the meaningful participation of students who have often been left out of large-scale accountability assessments and can even increase the mean test score for an entire school.

What Are Accommodations?

Testing accommodations are changes in the way a test is administered or in the way a student responds to the test. These changes offset or correct for distortions in scores that may be caused by a student's disability. Thus, accommodations help students reveal what they know on assessments without being impeded by their disability. A good way to explain accommodations to noneducators is to compare testing accommodations to an access ramp. Test accommodations facilitate access to a test for students with a wide range of disabilities just like a ramp facilitates access to a building for individuals with physical disabilities.

The tests students are required to take are designed to measure some specific skills or abilities, such as mathematical reasoning and computations. Test writers almost always assume that students have the skills to access the test, such as attending to instructions, reading story problems, and writing responses. However, some students with disabilities may have difficulty with the access skills needed to get into the test. Thus, valid testing accommodations, just like an access ramp, should reduce problems of access to a test and enable students to demonstrate what they know and can do with regard to the skills or abilities the test is targeting.

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Council for Exceptional Children

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) is the largest non-profit international professional organization dedicated to improving educational outcomes for individuals with exceptionalities, students with disabilities, and/or the gifted. CEC advocates for appropriate governmental policies, sets professional standards, provides continual professional development, advocates for newly and historically underserved individuals with exceptionalities, and helps professionals obtain conditions and resources necessary for effective professional practice. *CEC Today* is published eight times a year by the Council for Exceptional Children.

For more information, contact:
Council for Exceptional Children
1110 N. Glebe, Ste. 300
Arlington, VA 22201-5704
(888)232-7733, www.cec.sped.org

Arm Students with Test-Taking Strategies to Reduce Anxiety

Special education students may experience considerable stress when approaching a test because they fear their disabilities may limit their ability to express what they've learned or to show improvement. This stress can be relieved, in part, by arming students with appropriate preparation and test-taking strategies, according to Margo Mastropieri and Tom Scruggs, special education professors at George Mason University. Mastropieri and Scruggs spoke at a recent Council for Exceptional Children teleconference on adapting curricular materials for the secondary school classroom.

Educators should teach students academic techniques, making sure the students know the content and physical strategies—such as adequate rest and nourishment before studying or taking a test—Mastropieri and Scruggs said. Positivity is bred when educators work with students to set realistic goals, provide practice tests, reward effort, and teach effective test-taking skills. A child's attitude toward a test is important, they asserted.

"Focus on effort and strategies rather than the student's score or how others do," the presenters said. For example, on a true-or-false test, educators can add visual prompts such as writing out the words "true" and "false" in the directions instead of using the abbreviations "T" and "F." If students are instructed to circle the correct answer, teachers should draw a circle to give the student a

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Michigan's Assessments Include ALL Students

Peggy Dutcher, Consultant,
Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services, and
Project Director, MI-Access

Changes are underway for Michigan's Educational Assessment System (MEAS), many of which are in direct response to federal requirements. For example, the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) *Amendments of 1994* and the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) each require that state assessment systems include ALL students in state assessments. The Michigan State Board of Education's goals are consistent with those federal requirements because the Board's goals strive to increase achievement for ALL students in Michigan.

Michigan has taken several steps to increase student achievement. At its October 18, 2001 meeting, the State Board of Education adopted a policy that includes all Michigan students in the Michigan Educational Assessment System (MEAS) (see "State Board of Education Policy Includes ALL Students In the Michigan Educational Assessment System," page 7). In addition to the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP), with which most people are already familiar, Michigan now has MI-Access, Michigan's Alternate Assessment Program. MI-Access is designed for students who have varying levels of cognitive impairment. English Language Learner Access (ELL-Access) is designed for students for whom English is not their primary language.

Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP)

The MEAP is the only statewide standardized testing program aligned with the curriculum standards approved by the State Board of Education. MEAP tests are given to students in grades four, five, seven, eight, and eleven. Fourth graders currently take mathematics and reading MEAP tests. Fifth graders take science, social studies, and writing MEAP tests. Seventh graders currently take reading and writing MEAP tests. Beginning with the 2001-2002 school year, eighth grade students will take mathematics, science, and social studies MEAP tests. High school students take the MEAP test in all five subjects.

Various committees of Michigan educators provide services for MEAP. The test questions are designed from test blueprints drafted by Michigan educators. Committees of educators check all MEAP questions for content and bias to ensure that questions match the curriculum and are fair to all students. Educators also participate in range-finding, the process during which the scoring criteria are set for the open-ended items, and they score all open-ended items. Finally, educators serve as judges on the panels that recommend cut scores for the tests.

For more information, contact: Wendy Shane
(517) 373-8393, shanew@michigan.gov

MI-Access

Michigan's alternate assessment program (MI-Access) is designed to assess students with disabilities for whom the individualized education program (IEP) team determines that use of the MEAP assessment, even with assessment accommodations, is inappropriate.

The MI-Access assessments are intended for students age 9, 10, 13, 14, 17, and 18. These ages are somewhat parallel to those used in MEAP grade level assessments. The assessments include a standardized set of performance-based assessment activities. Teachers will have a six-week period to make their observations.

The Phase 1 MI-Access assessment includes two components: Participation and Supported Independence. These components are for students with severe or moderate cognitive impairments as well as for those who function as if they have such impairments. The Phase 2 MI-Access assessments addressing Functional Independence are currently in the beginning stages of development and are being aimed at students with mild cognitive impairment as well as at those who function as if they have mild cognitive impairment at grades 4, 5, 7, and 11.

For more information, contact:
Peggy Dutcher, (517) 335-0471
dutcherp@michigan.gov or
Frank McClelland, (517) 335-0477
mcclelland@michigan.gov

English Language Learners (ELL)-Access

ELL-Access will be a component of the Michigan Educational Assessment System designed to include all limited English proficient students in the state assessment system. ESEA, Title I requires inclusion of all students in a state's assessment system "to the extent practicable in the language and form most likely to yield accurate and reliable information on what such students know and can do, to determine such students' mastery of skills in subjects other than English." ELL-Access will be developed in cooperation with Michigan educators of ELL students. The system will provide guidance to school districts and public school academies about the most appropriate way to include each student in the MEAS. The ELL-Access will establish a defined process for school districts and public school academies to ensure that ELLs participate in a meaningful assessment process. The ELL-Access, developed during the summer of 2001, incorporates the requirements of ESEA and Title I as well as the requirements that are included in the expected reauthorization of ESEA.

The ELL-Access guidance document will provide direction to school districts and public school academies in the following areas:

- The identification of each student's level of English language proficiency;
- Procedures to determine whether assessment with MEAP will produce meaningful data;
- Procedures to determine whether accommodations permitted for ELL students are needed;
- Procedures to determine whether assessment with MEAP is unlikely to produce meaningful results due to the student's limited English language skills;

Continued on page 7…

State Board of Education Policy Includes ALL Students in the Michigan Educational Assessment System

The State Board of Education unanimously adopted the following policy on October 18, 2001:

It shall be the policy of the State Board of Education that each local and intermediate school district and public school academy will ensure the participation of all students in the Michigan Educational Assessment System.

Thomas D. Watkins Jr., Michigan Superintendent of Public Instruction

Kathleen N. Strauss, President, Michigan State Board of Education

Background

Through the development of alternate assessments, Michigan is preparing to have meaningful assessment options available for the inclusion of all students in its assessment system. The MI-Access Alternate Assessment program will provide an alternate assessment for students with disabilities for whom their individualized education programs (IEP) indicates that neither a Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) test nor a MEAP test with accommodations is appropriate. English Language Learner-Access (ELL-Access) will provide districts with guidance on when to select an English language proficiency assessment as the primary assessment instrument for an ELL student and when to have the student take a MEAP test or a MEAP test with accommodations.

The adoption of a policy to include all students in the state's assessment system is consistent with the State Board of Education's goal to increase achievement for all students. It also ensures participation of all Michigan students in the Michigan Educational Assessment System (MEAS) and complies with federal requirements.

For more information, contact:
Michigan State Board of Education
P.O. Box 30008, Lansing, MI 48909
(517) 373-3900, 335-4575 fax
www.mde.state.mi.us

MEAP Update
This periodic report of Michigan Educational Assessment Program activities is distributed to superintendents, school principals, and MEAP coordinators. Please copy and distribute this *MEAP Update*.
Vol. XIV, No. 1 P.O. Box 30715, Lansing, MI 48909 Phone: 517/373-8393 Fax: 517/335-1186 August 2001
MEAP Web Site: www.meritaward.state.mi.us

How the MEAP Office Works

All activities connected with the statewide MEAP tests administered to students in Michigan schools are coordinated by Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) staff. As part of the Michigan Department of Treasury, the MEAP staff is responsible for assessment in mathematics, science, language arts, and social studies. The staff works with staff members from:

- The Curriculum Development Program,
- Special Education,
- Career and Technical Education, and
- School Improvement and Accreditation.

The staff collaborates with representatives from content associations as assessments move from initial specifications to item writing, pilot testing, and finally, to full implementation.

For more information, contact:
Wendy Shane
www.MeritAward.state.mi.us

Assessment Related Websites

Check the following websites for helpful information about:

Michigan Department of Treasury
www.treas.state.mi.us

Michigan Educational Assessment Program
www.meritaward.state.mi.us

Michigan Department of Education
www.mde.state.mi.us/

Michigan's Assessments Include ALL Students (continued from page 6…)

- Informationfor the selection and administration of alternate assessments for students who do not participate in MEAP; and
- Guidance in recording and reporting the progress of ELLs who participate in alternate assessments.

For more information, contact:
Mazin Heiderson, (517) 373-6066
heidersonm@state.mi.us

Attention Educators—

Be Aware of Changes to the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP)

Peggy Dutcher, Consultant
Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services, and
Project Director, MI-Access

This year, there are some changes in the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) of which educators should be aware, particularly changes that relate to three areas—assessment accommodations, parent exemptions, and score exclusion. Following is detailed information that should help explain the changes in these areas.

Assessment Accommodations

On September 21, 2001, the MEAP office faxed a memorandum to all District MEAP Coordinators and elementary and middle school principals regarding "Audiotapes Used for Testing." This memorandum provided information on and may have raised questions about how the MEAP defines "standard" and "non-standard" assessment accommodations. Answers to that question, for the 2001/2002 school year, can be found in Figure 1 on page 9.

Three things should be noted about these definitions:

- Both readers and audiotapes will be considered standard accommodations for all MEAP tests for the 2001/2002 school year (audiotapes will not be available for the high school test reading assessment).
- MEAP scores accomplished using non-standard accommodations will not be used for Michigan Merit Award purposes.
- Accommodations that are not included on the standard accommodations list—but, in the opinion of school officials, parents, teachers, or other interested parties, do not violate the MEAP Test Administration Ethics policy and do not interfere with the intent of the assessments—may be approved by the Michigan Merit Award executive director pending review by the Michigan Merit Award Board.

Parent Exemptions and Score Exclusion

In 2000, the United States Department of Education (USDE) and its assembled Peer Review Panel reviewed each state's assessment system to determine whether the system was in compliance with the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act,* Title I. When the Michigan Department of Education's (MDE) system was reviewed, the review panel found several areas where the system failed to meet requirements.

To bring the MDE's assessment system into compliance, Michigan has requested and received a timeline waiver. Since failure to address all of the compliance requirements could result in jeopardizing Title I funds, the Department is working hard to make all necessary changes.

Including all students in Michigan's statewide assessment system is one area in which MDE is making changes. In doing so, MDE must provide the USDE with evidence of specific language of an assessment inclusion policy approved by the state legislature or the state board of education.

As explained in the August 2001 edition of MEAP *Update,* two significant changes are being made to meet the inclusion requirement. First, beginning fall 2001, there will no longer be a "parent exempt" bubble on any of the MEAP answer booklets. Second, score exclusion—which enables schools to exclude assessment scores of students with disabilities and English Language Learners from elementary and middle school MEAP summary reports—will be phased out. During the 2001/2002 school year, score exclusion will not be an option for the new MEAP mathematics and science assessments but will be an option for the reading, writing, and social studies tests. In the 2002/2003 school year, however, score exclusion will be completely phased out.

The reason for the two-year score exclusion phase-out is that it makes sense to introduce changes in policy at the same time that new MEAP assessments are introduced. Since new MEAP mathematics and science assessments are being implemented during the 2001/2002 school year, it makes sense to eliminate score exemption for those tests at the same time. Ultimately, it is the fairest way to establish a new baseline for the new tests.

All of these changes are addressed in the elementary, middle, and high school MEAP manuals. As of October 1, the fall 2001 and winter 2002 manuals can be accessed at www.meritaward.state.mi.us.

For more information, contact:
Peggy Dutcher, Michigan Department of Education Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services
P.O. Box 30008, Lansing, MI 48909
(517) 373-0923, 373-7504 fax
dutcherp@michigan.gov

meap
Michigan Educational Assessment Program

Standard Accommodations

Scheduling

- Provision of additional testing time
- Allowance of frequent or extended supervised breaks
- Administration of the test at a time most beneficial to the student, with appropriate supervision by a school district professional

Location

- Provision for test administration at home or in a care facility with appropriate supervision by a school district professional
- Provision for distraction-free space or alternate location (e.g., study carrel, front of classroom)
- Placement of student where he/she is most comfortable (e.g., front of room, back of room)
- Administration of test in a special education classroom
- Provision for individual test administration (supervised)
- Provision of special lighting
- Provision of adaptive or special furniture
- Provision for freedom to move, stand, or pace during an individualized test administration
- Provision of special acoustics
- Provision for test administration in a small group
- Provision of soft, calming music to minimize distractions

Assistance with Test Directions

- Reading directions to student
- Re-reading of directions for each subtask, as required
- Use of directions that have been highlighted
- Simplification of language in directions (paraphrase)
- Emphasis on verbs in directions
- Provision for student restatement of directions in his/her own words
- Use of sign language or oral interpreters for directions and sample items
- Clarification of directions by asking students to restate them

Assistance during Assessment

- Administration of test by special education teacher or similarly qualified person
- Reading of assessment content and questions to student
- Signing of assessment content and questions to student
- Use of page-turner
- Recording of student responses (writing or audio tape)
- Placement of teacher/proctor near student

Equipment and Assistive Technology

- Use of talking calculator (mathematics assessment only)
- Use of sign language to indicate student response, except for constructed response items
- Use of text-talk converter
- Use of visual magnification devices
- Use of auditory amplification devices
- Use of masks, overlays, or markers to maintain place
- Use of tape recorder to play audio tape version of tests
- Use of Braille writer for recording responses
- Use of communication device to indicate responses
- Use of calculator (mathematics assessments only)
- Use of rulers as provided by Michigan Educational Assessment Program
- Use of pencils adapted in size or grip
- Use of list of formulae as provided by Michigan Educational Assessment Program
- Use of noise buffers
- Use of computer or word processing equipment (spellchecker, thesaurus, and grammar check must be disabled)
- Use of bilingual translation dictionary
- Use of Braille ruler
- Use of acetate colored shield to reduce glare and increase contrast
- Use of voice-activated word processor (except for writing assessment)
- Use of devices or equipment to secure paper to desk

Test Format

- Use of lined or grid paper for recording answers
- Provision of Braille or large print editions of the assessments
- Permission to mark answers in test booklet for transfer to answer document by teacher or proctor
- Use of computer for task presentation
- Communication of test questions by audiotape
- Use of scribe for constructed response items (student must indicate punctuation and spell all key words)
- Permission to accomplish subtests in different order

meap
Michigan Educational Assessment Program

Non-Standard Accommodations

- Any accommodation not included as a standard accommodation that violates the Michigan Merit Award Test Administration Ethics Procedure
- Use of a calculator on any MEAP assessment other than mathematics assessments
- Use of electronic spell checkers, thesaurus, or grammar check
- Use of a dictionary, thesaurus, or spelling book for mathematics, science, social studies, or reading assessments
- Any test administration not directly supervised by a school district professional

Figure 1

MI-Access Goes Statewide Winter 2002

Peggy Dutcher, Consultant,
Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services, and
Project Director, MI-Access

By now, most educators have heard about, if not field-tested, Michigan's new alternate assessment called MI-Access. Many still wonder why the assessment is necessary.

Michigan developed MI-Access in response to the legal mandates requiring that all students—including those with disabilities—be included in state and districtwide assessments. The requirements can be found in numerous federal laws, including Section 504 of the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973*, Title II of the *Americans with Disabilities Act* of 1990 (ADA), Title 1 of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (Title 1), and the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997* (IDEA).

How do those laws affect Michigan? Assessment is an integral aspect of educational accountability systems because it provides valuable information that can benefit individual students by measuring their progress against standards or evaluating programs. Because of the benefits that accrue as a result of assessment, exempting students from assessments on the basis of disability would violate Section 504 and ADA.

In addition, the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (34CFR§300.138) requires the inclusion of students with disabilities in both state and district assessment systems. The legislation also requires that states and local districts, as appropriate, develop guidelines for participation so that students with disabilities can participate in state and district assessments. Furthermore, IDEA requires that states develop an alternate assessment for students for whom the regular state assessments are inappropriate, even with accommodations.

Primarily in response to this legislation, in 1998, the Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services (OSE/EIS) began development of the MI-Access (pronounced "My Access") assessments, constructed through a rigorous process involving extensive input from Michigan stakeholders.

MI-Access is being implemented in two phases. Phase 1 assessments are designed for: 1) students for whom the MEAP, or MEAP with assessment accommodations, is inappropriate; 2) students who have individualized education programs (IEP); and 3) students who have severe or moderate cognitive limitations or function as if they have such cognitive limitations. Phase 1 will be implemented statewide during winter 2002, and assessments will be administered once each year to students who are 9, 10, 13, 14, 17, and 18 years of age.

Currently under development, Phase 2 focuses on students with mild cognitive limitations. MDE expects that Phase 2 will be implemented statewide in winter 2005. Under discussion for Phase 2 is whether to develop the assessments by age or grade level.

For more information, contact:
Peggy Dutcher, Michigan Department of Education Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services
P.O. Box 30008, Lansing, MI 48909
(517) 373-0923, 373-7504 fax
dutcherp@michigan.gov

Peggy Dutcher shares information about Michigan's MI-Access at the 2001 Michigan Federated Chapters of the Council for Exceptional Children convention in Grand Rapids last March 2001.

The Assist Newsletter

The Assist is a newsletter designed to provide information on how to help students with disabilities gain greater access to and make progress in the general curriculum. *The Assist* is published by Beck Evaluations and Testing Associates, Inc., (BETA), a subsidiary of Touchstone Applied Science Associates Inc. (TASA), located in Brewster, New York.

In November 2000, the Michigan Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services awarded BETA a contract to help the Department implement Phase 1 and Phase 2 of MI-Access. As one component of the BETA contract, *The Assist* will provide information in four important ways:

- *The Assist* will include articles, features, and tips on specific instructional information to help students better experience and benefit from the general curriculum.
- *The Assist* will provide detailed information on Michigan's Educational Assessment System, particularly MI-Access, the state's new alternate assessment for measuring the progress of students with disabilities. Articles will include information on how the assessment was developed, the assessment project's history, legal mandates, and implementation efforts.
- *The Assist* will help BETA to obtain feedback from readers. By using the e-mail address mi-access@tasa.com, readers of *The Assist* can provide BETA with comments, suggest articles, and share their success stories.
- Finally, *The Assist* will regularly include resources—names, addresses, telephone numbers, online links, e-mail addresses, etc.—through which readers can obtain additional information on topics of interest.

The Assist will be published six times each year and will be available on the Internet at www.mde.state.mi.us/off/sped.

Glossary

ACCOMMODATION:
A change in how a student accesses and demonstrates learning that does not substantially change the instructional content. Accommodations enable students to demonstrate knowledge and skills more effectively by reducing the effects of the disability. An accommodation is a strategy that does not change the construct being tested or the compatibility of scores obtained from accommodated and non-accommodated testing.

ANNUAL GOALS:
A set of general statements that represent an expected achievement over a year's time for persons who have a disability and who are enrolled in special education programs and services.

AUEN:
Addressing Unique Educational Needs of Students with Disabilities (AUEN) performance expectations were approved (1998) by the Michigan State Board of Education as a framework for developing MI-Access, Michigan's alternate assessment program. It is also considered an extension of Michigan's Model Content Standards and is viewed as a means to allow students with disabilities to better access the opportunities and programs of the general curriculum.

BENCHMARKS:
Benchmarks are statements that indicate what students should know and be able to do at various developmental levels such as early and later elementary school, middle school, and high school.

CONTENT STANDARDS:
Standards that provide broad descriptions of what students should know and be able to do in the subject areas of English language arts, social studies, mathematics, and science. In addition, benchmarks in each of the content areas were drafted to further clarify the content standards. The standards and benchmarks do not comprise a state curriculum; they are specifically designed to be used by local school districts as they develop their curricula.

IDEA:
The Federal *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* describes and regulates educational opportunities for individuals with disabilities. It also requires that students with disabilities be included in statewide assessments.

IEP:
An individualized education program (IEP) team meeting occurs when a student has been referred for a special education evaluation. Federal rules and regulations indicate what must be included in the IEP related to state and districtwide assessment:

- A statement of any individual assessment accommodations for the state or districtwide assessments of student achievement that are needed in order for the child to participate in the assessment; and
- If the IEP team determines that the child will not participate in a particular state or districtwide assessment of student achievement (one or more subject areas), a statement of why that assessment is not appropriate for the child; and what alternate assessment will be used to assess the child.

MEAP:
Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) is one component of the Michigan Educational Assessment System used statewide to assess student performance in specific content areas. Content is linked to the Michigan Model Content Standards of the *Michigan Curriculum Framework*.

MI-Access:
Michigan's alternate assessment program is intended for students for whom the MEAP, or the MEAP with accommodations, is inappropriate. Phase 1 is based on observations of student performance during specific assessment activities developed from the performance expectations of the AUEN. Phase 2 development is just beginning.

MICHIGAN CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK:
The Michigan State Board of Education and Michigan Department of Education-approved resource is intended to assist Michigan's school design, implement, and assess core content area curricula. One of the components is the Content Standards and Benchmarks, which are coded for reference, detailed for clarification, and organized by cluster levels of early elementary, elementary, later elementary, middle school, and high school.

MODIFICATION:
Adaptations made in the curriculum, presentation method, or the environment to provide support for the individual child.

PERCENTILE SCORE:
A score that measures how a student scores compared to other students. This score indicates how many children (expressed as a percentile) scored above and below a particular child.

STANDARD DEVIATION:
A commonly used measure of the extent to which scores deviate from the mean (average).

STANDARD SCORE:
A raw score (based on the number correct) that has been transformed to have a given mean (mid-point) and standard deviation from the mean. A common number used to denote the midpoint of the average range is 100 with a standard deviation of 15 points. Any test that has 100 at the midpoint and a standard deviation of 15 can be compared to one another.

Administrator Perspective

Using Assessments Can Lead to Better Teaching

Thomas R. Guskey, Professor,
College of Education, University of Kentucky, Lexington

Dr. Guskey is professor of Educational Policy Studies and Evaluation at the University of Kentucky. A graduate of the University of Chicago, he has been a teacher at all levels, has served as an administrator in Chicago Public Schools, and was the first director of the Center for the Improvement of Teaching and Learning, a national educational research center.

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As long as tests and assessments are used only as means to document student achievement, their most powerful benefits—helping teachers identify their strengths, recognize their weaknesses, and target efforts to improve the quality of their teaching— will be missed.

Most of us can recall depressing experiences with tests from our years as students. One of the most notable for me occurred during my sophomore year in high school. I spent hours studying for a test that was a major portion of my grade in a particular course. I entered the classroom on the day of the test feeling confident that I was adequately prepared. However, when the teacher handed out the test and I read through it, panic overcame me. "Oh my gosh," I thought, "This isn't what I studied!" Despite my many hours of preparation, I did poorly on the test and received a low course grade.

This experience taught me two things. First, hard work and effort really don't pay off in certain high school classes. Neither my hours of preparation nor what I had learned were reflected in my test score. Given the nature of that test, I probably could have attained a comparable score with only a fraction of the preparation time. Second, it taught me that some high school teachers couldn't be trusted. Doing well in their courses wasn't determined by how much I learned; it was determined by how well I could anticipate what they would ask on tests. The key to a high grade, therefore, was not to study what I perceived as important or even to study what was stressed in the text. The key was to guess what that particular teacher thought was important.

From that point on, I succeeded in my classes to the degree that I was able to outguess my teachers. I learned their game and I played it well. Occasionally, my efforts were thwarted by teachers who took pride in their ability to outsmart their students. Their tests were "gotcha" experiences that resigned some students to failure and frustrated all. I presumed they did this because it had been done to them—an unconscious way of passing on a hollow tradition.

Happily, such practices are rare today. As the quality of teaching has improved, so has the way educators prepare tests and assessments. Students are seldom surprised by the questions they are asked, and most judge the tests and assessments their teachers administer to be fair measures of what they have learned. The best tests and assessments facilitate student learning by providing essential feedback about their learning progress, helping them identify their learning problems and offering guidance and direction for correcting those problems (Bloom, Madaus, and Hastings 1981).

Thomas R. Guskey

Despite these improvements, however, most high school teachers do not take advantage of assessments as tools to improve their teaching. Teachers must view the results from their assessments in ways that help them to identify what was taught well and what needs refinement or revision.

Analyzing Assessment Results

An easy but effective way to use tests and assessments to improve teaching is to conduct a simple analysis of each test item or criterion used to evaluate a paper, performance, or demonstration. A tally of how many students missed each item or failed to meet a particular criterion will identify the trouble spots. Special attention should be paid to those items or criteria missed by half or more of the students in the class.

The first thing to consider in such cases is the quality of the item or criterion itself. In other words, the teacher must determine whether the problem rests with the assessment tool. Perhaps the question is ambiguously worded. Perhaps the criterion is

Continued on page 13…

A Principal's Guide to Special Education

What does a principal need to know about special education to make sure it is implemented effectively in his or her school? What is the principal's role in special education? David Bateman and C. Fred Bateman answer these questions in *A Principal's Guide to Special Education,* just published by Council for Exceptional Children (CEC).

Written from a principal's point of view by experienced principals and other practitioners, and unique in format, *A Principal's Guide to Special Education* reads as a handbook of essential information. The book is organized around what principals need to know.

Topics covered include:

- Special education laws;
- Function and development of individualized education programs;
- Policy issues regarding disciplining students with disabilities;
- Eligibility, assessments, and evaluations;
- Inclusive schools;
- Accommodations and adaptations at the elementary and secondary levels
- Due process; and
- Selecting and evaluating special education teachers.

To order, call (888) CEC-SPED. Order #P5356, ISBN 0-86586-374-1.

Using Assessments Can Lead to Better Teaching
(continued from page 12…)

unclear. Perhaps students misinterpreted what the teacher wanted. Whatever the case, teachers must look carefully at those items or criteria to see whether they adequately address the knowledge, the understanding, or the skill they were intended to measure.

If no obvious problems are found in the test items or assessment criteria, teachers must be willing to turn to their teaching if half the students in a class miss a clear and concise question about a concept that was taught very well. Whatever strategy was used, whatever examples were employed, or whatever explanation was offered, it simply didn't work. When half the students in the class answer a question incorrectly or fail to meet a particular criterion, it's not a student learning problem—it's a teaching problem.

Analyzing test or assessment results in this way means setting aside some powerful ego issues. Teachers' initial responses after identifying items or the criteria missed by a majority of students is often, "Well, I taught them. They just didn't learn it!" But on further reflection, most recognize that effectiveness in teaching is not defined by what they do as teachers. Rather, it is defined by what their students are able to do. If few students learn what is taught, can we really say that the teaching was effective?

Can effective teaching take place in the absence of learning? Renowned educator Ralph W. Tyler argued that it could not (1949). Tyler maintained that asserting, "I taught them, they just didn't learn it" is as foolish as saying, "I sold it to them, and they just didn't buy it." Imagine how ridiculous it would sound for a coach to say, "I taught this person how to swim. It's not my fault if each time he jumps in the water he still sinks." To Tyler, the best and most defensible criterion of teaching effectiveness is student learning. If few students learn, Tyler argued, how could anyone reasonably contend that effective teaching occurred?

Predicting What Works

Many teachers are astonished to learn that they can be poor judges of what works and what doesn't work in their teaching. In my own teaching, I am often taken by surprise. There have been times when I thought my presentations in class were truly inspired. My delivery was animated, my examples were clear, and my insights were truly incisive. Later, when I asked a question on a test or an assessment about the ideas or concepts I introduced during that sterling presentation, few students answered correctly. After squelching the initial impulse to blame my students, I realize that it is I who must make some changes.

Some might argue that such a perspective puts too much responsibility on teachers and not enough on the students. Don't students have significant responsibilities in this process? Shouldn't students, especially at the high school level, be expected to display initiative and personal accountability? "If they don't get it, that's their fault, not mine. I'm here to teach and they're here to learn."

Indeed, responsibility for learning is shared. Even the most valiant teaching efforts cannot guarantee that all students will learn excellently. Rarely do teachers find a test item or assessment criterion that is answered correctly by every one of their students. There are always those students who don't care enough or who are unwilling to put forth the effort necessary for success. However, if a teacher is reaching less than half of the students in the class, the problem isn't the students'—it's the teacher's.

Finding Ways to Improve Teaching

Finding ways to improve teaching once trouble spots are identified can be difficult, especially if teachers believe they have to do it alone. Fortunately, they don't.

Every school has excellent teachers who inspire their students and teach well. These outstanding teachers are usually more than willing to share their strategies and techniques. But structured professional development opportunities for such reflection and collaboration are also necessary (Guskey 1998, 2000). In addition, district level personnel are wonderful resources for ideas and practical advice. In most cases, they are eager to provide assistance. Collaborative partnerships with local colleges and universities offer yet another valuable resource. Most important, using tests and assessments to help teachers improve their instructional skills cannot be restricted to a once-a-year activity based on statewide assessment results. Instead, it must be done every time any form of classroom test or assessment is administered and scored.

If tests and assessments are used only as a means to document student achievement, the powerful benefit of teacher feedback will be missed. Assessments can tell teachers what worked well and what didn't. They allow teachers to identify their strengths, recognize their weaknesses, and target efforts to improve the quality of their teaching. Classroom tests and assessments can not only enhance the effectiveness of instructional efforts, but can also improve the quality of teachers' ongoing assessment methods, which, in the long run, will help significantly improve student learning.

For more information, contact:
Thomas R. Guskey, College of Education
Taylor Education Building
University of Kentucky
Lexington, KY 40506
(859) 257-8666
guskey@pop.uky.edu.

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Bloom, B.S.; G.F. Madaus; and J. T. Hastings. 1981. *Evaluation to improve learning*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Guskey, T.R. 1998. Making time to train your staff. *The School Administrator* 55 (7): 35-37.

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Assessments Help Fine Tune Children's and Families' Priorities and Needs through *Early On*®

Marcia Radin, Parent and Former Early On® Michigan Newsletter *Editor*

Reprinted from Early On® Michigan Newsletter*, Volume 9, No. 4*

The *Early On*® evaluation establishes the developmental status of the child. Once the initial evaluation is completed, further evaluation is required only to answer questions about the child's continuing eligibility for *Early On*® services. Assessments, on the other hand, are conducted throughout the child's and family's involvement in *Early On*®, as a way of fine tuning the child's and family's participation to best meet their current priorities and needs.

Everyone benefits when families choose to become active participants in the evaluation and assessment process. Professional and parent liaisons can play a crucial role in teaching the family how to express their concerns, ask questions, assess their child's and family's priorities and needs, and gain skills to support the development of their child.

Intake personnel can introduce parents to their "expert" role by listening closely to their concerns, commenting on their strengths, and other ways of setting the tone for a parent-professional relationship in which parent priorities guide the intervention process.

Similarly, the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) team can help prepare families to take an active role in the evaluation and assessment process. Zero to Three, a national organization devoted to advancing the healthy development of babies and young children, addresses ways to achieve this goal. Two of their publications, *New Visions: A Parent's Guide to Understanding Developmental Assessment* and *Planning and Preparing for Your Child's Developmental Assessment* can be found on their website at www.zerotothree.org.

A sample of the guidelines suggested by Zero to Three for developmental assessments are:

Explain that the assessment process should identify the child's current strengths and abilities as well as competencies that will help the child develop further. Professionals can explain: "In development, one capacity builds on another. It is important to help the professionals understand what your child can do already and what is important to your family's interests and needs. For example… if holding hands… or enjoying the park is important in your family, then working on those skills should be a priority [as they provide] new opportunities to enjoy being with people and to learn about the world. Think about what is important in your family. What skills could help make the time spent with your child more satisfying? Plan to build on your child's current strengths and capabilities to make those dreams a reality."

Prepare the family for their part in the assessment by explaining the order of the steps the assessment of a baby or young child's development should follow. Begin the process by asking the family what questions it hopes the assessment will answer. Listen carefully to the family's story, and work with the parent to make the observation setting as much like ordinary play at home as possible. Share with parents your observations of the interactions and the relationship between the child and the people conducting the assessment in order to see whether the child's response is typical. Include in your written report answers to parents' original questions and other questions that may have come up during the assessment.

An assessment should feel like help. Parents say they learn new ideas and realize they are not alone with their questions when they have the chance to observe and talk about their child's development with experienced professionals.

Part C of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) (chart at right) emphasizes the role of parents in evaluation and assessment.

For more information, contact:
Citizens Alliance to Uphold Special Education (CAUSE)
2365 Woodlake Dr., Ste. 100
Okemos, MI 48864
(517) 347-2283, (800) *Early On*® (327-5966)
www.mde.state.mi.us/off/sped/

Source:
New Visions: A Parent's Guide to Understanding Developmental Assessment. Zero to Three webpage, www.zerothree.org, Parent Section.

Regulations for Part C of IDEA

Sec. 303.322 (b)
Definitions of evaluation and assessment:

(1) **Evaluation** means the procedures used by appropriate, qualified personnel to determine a child's initial and continuing eligibility, consistent with the definition of "infants and toddlers with disabilities" under Part C (Sec.303.16).

(2) **Assessment** means the ongoing procedures used by appropriate, qualified personnel throughout the period of a child's eligibility under Part C to identify:

(i) The child's unique strengths and needs and the services appropriate to meet those needs.

(ii) The resources, priorities, and concerns of the family and the supports and services necessary to enhance the family's capacity to meet the developmental needs of their infant or toddler with a disability.

Sec.303.322 (C)
Requirements for evaluation and assessment:

The evaluation and assessment of the child must:

(1) Be conducted by trained personnel

(2) Be based on informed clinical opinion

(3) Include the following:

(i) A review of current health records and medical history.

(ii) An evaluation of the child's level of functioning in each developmental area (cognitive, physical, communication, social/emotional, adaptive).

(iii) An assessment of the unique needs of the child in terms of each developmental area, including the identification of services appropriate to meet those needs.

(iv) A voluntary family assessment, which must be family-directed, and designed to determine the resources, priorities, and concerns of the family related to enhancing the development of the child.

Sec.303.322 (d)
Timelines:

(1) The evaluation and initial assessment of each child (including the family assessment) must be completed within the 45-day time period.

(2) In the event of exceptional circumstances that make it impossible to complete the evaluation and assessment within 45 days (e.g., if a child is ill), public agencies will document those circumstances and, with parental consent, develop and implement an interim IFSP with the name of the service coordinator and the early intervention services needed immediately by the child and the child's family. The evaluation and assessment must be completed within the required 45-day time period.

Parent Perspective

Parent Involvement in Evaluation Is Important

Deb Russell, Former Director, Family Information Exchange, and Member, Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)

Reprinted from Early On® Michigan Newsletter,*Volume 9, No. 4*

This article focuses on *why* eligibility evaluation is important and *what* about it is important. Because the *Early On*® evaluation is one of the first evaluations families go through, it sets the tone for parent expectations, hopes, and fears for all future evaluations. The experience becomes one of participating in something important in the lives of families.

As a parent of a teen with disabilities, I have taken part in many evaluations for eligibility. One experience involved ten different evaluations in one week to qualify for a program that our son needed. I believe what is possible (and required) by *Early On*® is better than what I experienced as a parent in the days before *Early On*®.

Parents feel ambivalence and stress about evaluation. Many parents may have a feeling that something is wrong, and they are relieved to have confirmation. At the same time, the confirmation is upsetting. As a parent, I wanted to find out what was wrong and how to gain eligibility for programs and services to help. At the same time, I didn't want anything to be wrong, or for my child and family to need help.

Why *Early On*® Evaluation Is Important for Families

- It provides reliable information about their child's development and how the child can be helped to develop.
- It is the basis for beginning the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP).
- It allows families and children to receive *Early On*® services.

What Is Important about the Way Evaluation Is Done?

Parental involvement and collaboration in all aspects of their child's evaluation is important. Why? Being asked and given options helps parents build experience and acquire helpful skills. Being involved reduces anxiety and gives more control and good information. Professionals exchange important information with parents, helping parents as well as their children to develop capabilities. Parental involvement can avoid wasting resources with unnecessary assessments.

How Parents Are Involved In the Evaluation

- The evaluation focuses on getting the information and service eligibility parents want for their children.
- Parents help choose the evaluation instrument and take part in decisions about the number and kinds of professionals they will be seeing, what they can hope to learn through the procedures, and how the results will be shared with them.
- The developmental history includes the parents' perception and understanding of their child and of the child's capacities.
- Parents are present for the evaluation. This makes children comfortable and helps them do their best, and lets parents see what is happening.
- Evaluation is done in the natural environment at a convenient time for the family. When possible, the natural environment used is the home. This is where the child is developing and comfortable and will be seen most accurately.
- The evaluation process respects families' cultural values and beliefs.
- Results are given in person so parents can ask questions and be supported. Meetings are scheduled so that all family members who need to be informed can be present. When one parent has to give bad news or complicated information to another, it adds to family stress.
- Everyday language is used and reports are written in language parents understand—including their own native language.
- Parents provide input to the report and are given written copies to help parents learn about their child. It also helps parents to be accurate when they need to provide a history as their child becomes older, saving time. This is valuable in a crisis.
- Families are offered time to process evaluation information, especially when it is hard or surprising to them, before they have to make important decisions. Feedback may need to occur on more than one visit.
- The evaluation emphasizes strengths and capabilities of the child and family, not just deficits. "Wholeness" is stressed over "brokenness" and disability.

For more information, contact:
Citizens Alliance to Uphold Special Education (CAUSE)
2365 Woodlake Dr., Ste. 100
Okemos, MI 48864
(517) 347-2283, (800) *Early On*® (327-5966)
www.mde.state.mi.us/off/sped/

Resources

Early On*® *Michigan's Family Guidebook to Early Intervention Services, edited by L. Bryn Fortune. Available from *Early On* ® service providers or call (800) EARLYON (800) 327-5966.

Family-Directed Child Evaluation and Assessment under IDEA: Lessons from Families and Programs, Berman, C., & Shaw, E., 1995, 25 pp. Available from NEC*TAS (National Early Childhood Technical Assistance System), (919) 962-2001.

Guidelines and Recommended Practices for the Individualized Family Service Plan, Second Edition, McGonigel, M., Kaufmann, and Johnson, B., Eds., Association for the Care of Children's Health, 1991. (301) 654-6549 or (800) 808-ACCH.

Instruction and Assessment Should Be Tightly Aligned and Interwoven

Sheila A. Potter, Retired Coordinator, English Language Arts,
Michigan Department of Education

The *Michigan Curriculum Framework* begins with a vision statement:

Michigan's K-12 education will ensure that all students will develop to their potential in order to lead productive and satisfying lives. All students will engage in challenging and purposeful learning that blends their experiences with content knowledge and real-world applications in preparation for their adult roles, which include becoming:

- *Literate individuals*
- *Healthy and fit people*
- *Responsible family members*
- *Productive workers*
- *Involved citizens*
- *Self-directed lifelong learners*

Educators must be mindful of these major life roles as we design curriculum, instruction, and assessment for all our students, including those with disabilities. The increasingly rigorous and changing societal and workplace demands of the current information age call for teaching and learning processes that support inquiry, self-reflection, problem solving, collaboration, and communication in a variety of oral, written, and visual modes. These are skills critically needed to successfully perform any and all of the adult roles identified in the *Michigan Curriculum Framework*.

The *Michigan Curriculum Framework* is the basis for curriculum development and implementation in local school districts. It defines rigorous expectations for all Michigan students in the form of content standards and benchmarks that describe what students should know and be able to do by the end of 12th grade. To support educators in ensuring that students achieve the content standards, the *Michigan Curriculum Framework* also describes teaching and learning standards, professional development standards, and, lastly, classroom assessment standards. These three sets of "support standards" enable schools and teachers to design instruction and ongoing assessment experiences that are anchored in real-world, authentic tasks matched to the strengths and needs of individual learners.

The classroom assessment standards in the *Michigan Curriculum Framework* were developed by the Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools at the University of Wisconsin. These standards can be used to generate assessment tasks and to evaluate the degree to which assessments are meaningful, authentic, and aligned to the content standards and teaching and learning standards. A list of the classroom assessment standards, with brief explanations and examples, follows:

- Organization of Information—The task asks students to organize, synthesize, interpret, or evaluate information and to represent it in a different way. On the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) writing assessment, students must organize their ideas prior to drafting text.
- Consideration of Alternatives—The task gives students choices. They must consider alternative solutions, strategies, perspectives, or points of view. Constructed response items on the MEAP tests allow for student choice and for more than one correct response.
- Disciplinary Content—The task asks students to demonstrate understanding and/or use of knowledge, theories, and concepts considered central to the academic discipline. For example, the core democratic values are critical themes in social studies that must be taught and assessed.
- Disciplinary Process—The task expects students to use methods or processes of inquiry, research, or communication characteristic of the discipline. For instance, the use of writing process steps (e.g., pre-write, draft, revise, edit, etc.), or reading strategies (e.g., predicting, summarizing, questioning, etc.) are incorporated into assessment activities.
- Elaborated Written Communication—The task asks students to elaborate on their understanding, explanations, or conclusions through extended writing. Interviewing and conferencing face to face with students are oral variations of this standard.
- Problem Connected to the World beyond the Classroom—The task asks students to explore a concept, solve a problem, or explain an issue that is similar to one they are likely to encounter in real life. Such activities involve thinking and "performing" as historians do in using primary documents for investigation, or as scientists and mathematicians do as they research important problems.

Sheila Potter

- Audience beyond the School—The task expects students to present a product or performance or take some action for an audience beyond the teacher. For example, for culminating assessments at the end of thematic units, panels of "judges" composed of community members are invited to attend and evaluate student presentations.

The Latin root of the word "assess" means "to sit beside." In classrooms that address the needs of the "whole learner," students and teachers sit beside each other, cognitively engaging in meaningful demonstrations of understanding that reflect the assessment standards in the *Michigan Curriculum Framework*. Learners are doing the work of learning—setting individual learning goals, monitoring their progress, and setting new goals. Through continuous assessment and feedback to students, teachers monitor student growth toward achievement of the benchmarks, and, thus, encourage learners to become all that they are capable of becoming. Instruction and assessment are so tightly aligned and interwoven that they are nearly indistinguishable.

For more information, contact:
Sheila Potter, (517) 351-3753
sandjpotter@voyager.net
To obtain a copy of the *Michigan Curriculum Framework*, contact:
Michigan Department of Education
State Board of Education
P.O. Box 30008, Lansing, MI 48909
(517) 373-3900, 335-4575 fax

Source:
Newman, F., Secada, W.; and Wehlage, A Guide to Authentic Instruction and Assessment: Vision, Standards, and Scoring, *Wisconsin Center for Educational Research, 1995.*

Highland Park Schools Share a Strategy for Improving Assessment Results

Strategic Efforts Focus on Improved Results for Diverse Students

Reprinted from Research Connections in Special Education *a biannual review of research on topics in special education, (Number 7, Fall 2000), focusing on research sponsored by the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP)*

Several years ago, the Highland Park School District in Michigan received support from the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) to develop a demonstration model that provided a community-based program focused on serving children with emotional disturbance in a culturally competent manner.

Prior to the OSEP project, students in Highland Park had a 90% failure rate on the statewide assessment test; 65% of students at the middle school were expelled or suspended annually for behavioral infractions. At the end of the grant period, external evaluations showed significant student improvement, including a reduction of 75% in referrals out of classrooms for disruptive behavior.

Today, the district fully funds the program, which provides wraparound services to middle school youngsters. Wraparound refers to an approach for surrounding the child and the family with a network of services in natural home, school, and community environments.

Family involvement is a key component of the Highland Park approach. "Throughout all aspects of the program, families are key team members," asserts LeVan Townsel, program director. "Families are involved in identifying supports and designing implementation plans for the services they and their child receive." According to Townsel, the success of the approach is based on an underlying core belief that families are not the source of their child's difficulty, but rather are partners in planning for their child's needs.

Program staff have learned much about being culturally sensitive when interacting with families. Townsel offers the following recommendations:

- Take time to educate the family. Many families do not know what emotional disturbance means. They may not feel comfortable asking questions. In cases where they know about special education, they may view the process negatively.
- Go to the family. Whenever possible, meet with the family in the home.
- Arrange parent support groups. Help parents come together to support each other. Encourage them to develop advocacy skills.
- Find out what parents need. Often times, parents need support or an extra boost. Find out what might help them feel more confident.
- Push for parent membership on school and community teams and boards. Parents should be given opportunities to contribute their expertise in ways that are not directly related to their own child.
- Encourage parents to talk about their dreams for the child. Don't tell parents what is wrong with their situation—they already know.
- Gain an understanding of the family's economic situation. It is important to understand how poverty affects families. For example, families may have experience working with welfare agencies that do business differently than schools. It is important to understand behaviors within many contexts and to take an integrated approach to understanding people.
- Learn as much about the culture of the families with whom you are working as possible. Find out their values—how they view disabilities and mental health issues.

For more information, contact:
LeVan Townsel
Highland Park Community Junior High School
15900 Woodward, Highland Park, MI 48203
(313) 852-3001 #1301 or
Research Connections
ERIC/OSEP Special Project
The ERIC Clearinghouse on
Disabilities and Gifted Education
The Council for Exceptional Children
1920 Association Dr., Reston, VA 20191-1589
(800) 328-0272, http://ericec.org

LeVan Townsel

More minority children continue to be served in special education than would be expected from the percentage of minority students in the general school population.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) P.L. 105-17

Project WRAPAROUND

Transitional Assessment Should Include Students' Needs, Interests, and Preferences

Empowerment and Self-Determination Lead to Student Involvement in the Assessment Process

Sue Severson, Professor of Special Education, Minnesota State University Moorhead

Transitional services for youth with disabilities came to life with the passage of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) in 1990. This law is explicit in identifying the recipients of transition planning, targeting the individualized education program (IEP) as the vehicle for organizing the process (a statement of transition services for students beginning no later than age 16 and annually thereafter must be included in each student's IEP). IDEA also states that transition services must be based on a student's "needs, interests, and preferences." A position statement published by the Division of Career Development Training (DCDT) indicated that student involvement in the evaluation process results in an "emerging sense of empowerment," eventually leading to self-determination.

We are now required to provide a statement of transition services in each student's IEP by age 14 (PL 105-17). It is through the assessment of needs that we identify if there is a discrepancy between current performance and the skills needed to achieve aspirations for adult life. Transitional planning addresses how student "needs, preferences, and interests" (IDEA, 1990) must evolve from comprehensive assessment that generates answers to the following three questions:

- What are the student's future goals?
- What skills must the student possess and acquire to achieve his/her goals?
- What planning issues need to be addressed to allow the student to experience success in vocational, residential, and community environments?

Future Goals

It is impossible to develop relevant educational programs if educators and other team members remain unaware of a student's dreams and aspirations for the future. Developed in collaboration with the student, the educational program should target goals for adult life that the student (and/or his/her parents) has identified. The Enderle-Severson Transition Rating Scales (ESTR-R Michigan and ESTR-J Michigan, 1996) assess future goals of students by collecting student/parent responses about aspirations in each of four transition areas. This assessment involves a simple, one-page checklist to gather information about "interests and preferences" relative to post-school adult living, post-secondary education, training, planning, community participation, and employment. In most cases, the student can complete this checklist with assistance from support personnel. In some cases, when students are unable to perform this activity, parental input should be used. Information gathered via these worksheets can easily be translated into future goal statements. Another transition assessment instrument, Transition Planning Inventory by Clark & Patton, 1997, provides assessment of future goals by identifying preferences and interests in nine areas.

Early assessment of student preferences and interests is necessary in selecting appropriate educational experiences. Teams must focus on the student's goal for his/her future when planning the student's program (Halpern, 1994).

Skills for Adult Functioning

The second question our assessment process needs to answer is, "What skills must the student possess and acquire to achieve his/her goals?" The Enderle-Severson Michigan Scales provide informal, criterion-referenced assessments to identify skills and needs in each of four transition areas. These can easily be summarized into performance levels that describe both strengths and possible areas of concern. The Transition Planning Inventory by Clark & Patton, 1997, also provides screening of skill needs in nine transition areas.

The IEP team must discuss and plan for experiences that address the possible areas of concern identified in the assessment process when a student reaches the age of 14. Students with developmental disabilities are often involved in a life skills curriculum at this point in their educational careers. For students with mild disabilities, the team must identify how the needs are to be addressed. In the book *Life Centered Career Education Curriculum* by Brolin, 1997, infusion of transition skills into the general education curriculum is recommended. Careful planning must assure that the important skills needed for adult functioning are not ignored in favor of a remedial or tutorial approach.

Planning Issues

The third question that the assessment process needs to answer is, "What 'planning issues' need to be addressed to allow the student to experience success in vocational, residential, and community environments?" Generally, the identification of needs focuses on skills. However, the transition of youth with disabilities involves more than just identifying and addressing essential skills; planning is also involved. For example, if students wish to continue their education after high school, they need to make plans to visit schools, apply, and finance this education. Also, housing plans must be addressed. If students want to access post-school support services such as rehabilitation services, or social services, they must secure information about qualifying and applying. Smooth transitions will not occur if planning is incomplete. Assessment must identify the planning issues that need to be addressed, establish a timeline, and identify persons responsible for conducting each activity. The Enderle-Severson Michigan Scales identify these planning areas.

For more information, contact:
Sue Severson, Special Education Department
Minnesota State University Moorhead
Moorhead MN 56563, (218) 233-2842, 236-5199 fax
severson@mnstate.edu

To receive a copy of the ESTER-J, ESTER-R contact: Transition Services Project, 702 Lake Lansing Rd., Ste. D. East Lansing, MI 48823 (517) 332-3587, 332-3956 fax

OSE/EIS Answers Questions about Standardized Testing for Students with Disabilities

How Do Standardized Tests Fit into a Student's IEP?

Editor's Note: The following questions are commonly asked by parents of children with disabilities. You may find it helpful to refer to the glossary of terms on page 11 for additional clarification.

Q1: Do all special education students have to take the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) tests?

A1: All students have the right to take the MEAP tests. Determining whether or not a student has to take the MEAP or MEAP with assessment accommodations, if needed, or alternate assessment is the responsibility of the individualized education program (IEP) team.

Q2: Why does the IEP Team need to address the MEAP and alternate assessment?

A2: *The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) as amended in 1997 states:

Section 612 (17) PARTICIPATION IN ASSESSMENTS-
(A) IN GENERAL—Children with disabilities are included in general state- and district-wide assessment programs, with appropriate accommodations, where necessary. As appropriate, the State or local educational agency:

(i) develops guidelines for the participation of children with disabilities in alternate assessments for those children who cannot participate in state- and district-wide assessment programs; and
(ii) develops and, beginning no later than July 1, 2000, conducts those alternate assessments.

Also, the March 12, 1999 Federal Regulations for implementing IDEA 1997 indicate what must be included in the IEP related to state- and district-wide assessments (§300.347(5)(i)—(ii)(A), (B).(5)

(i) A statement of any individual modifications in the administration of state or districtwide assessments of student achievement that are needed in order for the child to participate in the assessment; and

(ii) If the IEP team determines that the child will not participate in a particular state or districtwide assessment of student achievement (or part of an assessment), a statement of:

(A) Why that assessment is not appropriate for the child; and (B) How the child will be assessed.

Q3: What is the State Board of Education's policy on participation in state assessment?

A3: The policy is to include ALL students in the Michigan Educational Assessment System (MEAS).

Background

Through the development of alternate assessments, Michigan is preparing to have meaningful assessment options available for the inclusion of all students in its assessment system. The MI-Access alternate assessment program will provide an alternate assessment for students with disabilities for whom their individualized education program (IEP) indicates that neither a MEAP test nor a MEAP test with accommodations is appropriate. English Language Learner (ELL)- Access will provide districts with guidance on when to select an English language proficiency assessment as the primary assessment instrument for an ELL student and when to have the student take a MEAP test or a MEAP test with accommodations.

The adoption of a policy to include all students in the state's assessment system is consistent with the State Board of Education's goal to increase achievement for all students. It also assures participation of all Michigan students in the Michigan Educational Assessment System and complies with federal requirements for implementing IDEA 1997.

Policy

It shall be the policy of the State Board of Education that each local and intermediate school district and public school academy will ensure the participation of all students in the Michigan Educational Assessment System. Adopted October 18, 2001.

Q4: If the IEP team determines that a student will NOT take one or more of the MEAP high school tests, will that student still be eligible for the Michigan Merit Award?

A4: The IEP team, especially the parent(s), should be informed that a student must take all of the qualifying MEAP assessments (reading, writing, science, and mathematics) in order to have the opportunity to qualify for the Michigan Merit Award. Also, a student who does not take one or more of the

Continued on page 20…

OSE/EIS Answers Assessment Questions (continued from page 19…)

MEAP tests will not be eligible for an endorsement in the subject area(s) not tested. For further information on the Michigan Merit Award, call (888) 956-3748 or visit the website at www.MeritAward.state.mi.us.

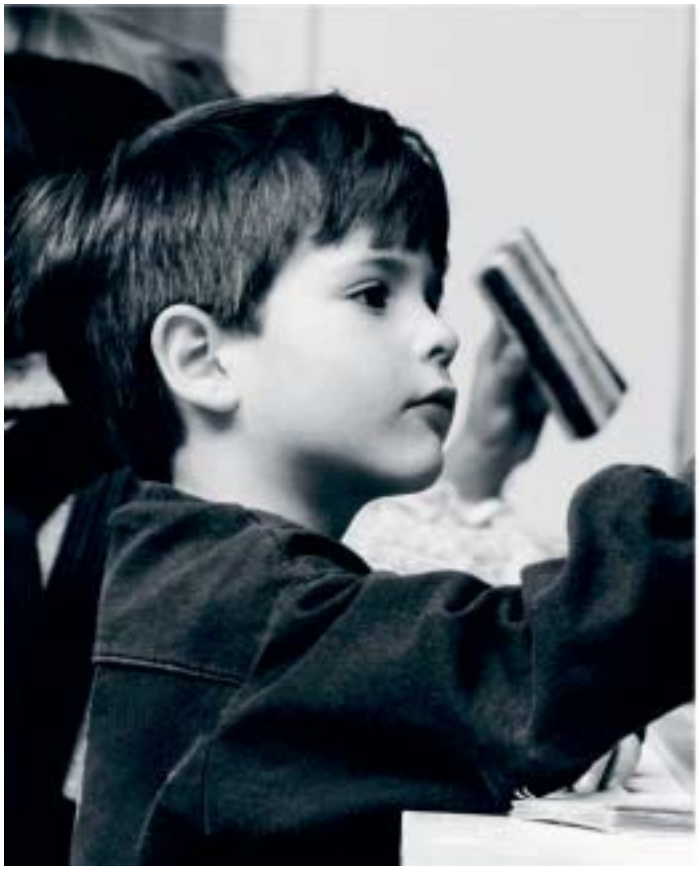
Q5: What must be done if the IEP team determines that the student will be taking the MEAP tests, but, before testing, the parent(s) decides it is not appropriate for his/her child to take the MEAP tests?

A5: The decision should be made at the IEP team meeting. If the parent(s) later determines that the MEAP is not appropriate for his/her child, parents must be notified that the student will not have the opportunity to qualify for the Michigan Merit Award (middle school and high school) or qualify for endorsements in the subject areas the MEAP high school tests assess. The parent(s) also needs to know that the IEP team must reconvene to determine what alternate assessment will be used to assess the student.

Q6: What does it mean to EXCLUDE a student's scores and does the IEP team determine this?

A6: Currently, any student who has been found eligible for special education services through an IEP and receives 49% or less of his/her reading/English instruction per week through general education may be considered to have his/her scores excluded. This means the student's tests are scored, but the scores are not included in the school, district, and state summary reports. Individual Student Reports and Parents Reports are generated for all students who have their scores excluded. The decision to exclude scores is a local school decision.

Federal legislation requires that ALL students be included in state assessment/accountability systems. During the 2001-2002 school year, there is no option of excluding the scores for the mathematics and science test. This option for the social studies, reading, and writing assessments will be eliminated during the 2002-2003 school year.



Q7: If the student's scores are excluded for the reading, writing, and/or social studies tests, does this mean the student cannot qualify for the Michigan Merit Award?

A7: No, the Michigan Merit Award is based on the individual student's scores.

Q8: Will the Phase 1 MI-Access, Michigan's Alternate Assessment Program, be available to administer during the 2001-2002 school year?

A8: YES. The Phase 1 (for students with severe and moderate cognitive impairment) MI-Access assessments will be implemented statewide during the winter of 2002.

Q9: Since the MI-Access Functional Independence assessment will not be implemented until the winter of 2005, what should the IEP team indicate in the IEP as an alternate assessment?

A9: Until the MI-Access Functional Independence assessment (for students with mild cognitive impairment) is implemented statewide, the interim guidelines state that the IEP team may individually determine the specified method of alternate assessment. Until further guidance is available from the Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services (OSE/EIS), the report on the progress on the annual goals may be used as an alternate assessment.

Q10: Does the OSE/EIS have guidelines the IEP team can use when determining if a student should participate in the MEAP, MEAP with assessment accommodations, or alternate assessment?

A10: The OSE/EIS is collaborating with the Office of Field Services and the MEAP office to draft the final guidelines for participation in the Michigan Educational Assessment System (MEAS). Draft guideline materials were distributed with the MI-Access training materials in the fall of 2001.

Continued on page 21…

OSE/EIS Answers Assessment Questions (continued from page 20…)

Q11: What might the IEP team consider when determining if a student should participate in the MEAP assessments?

A11: There are many questions the IEP team could ask. For example,

1. Is the student's instructional program consistent with Michigan's Model Content Standards?
2. Does the student lack the cognitive ability to learn even the easiest material on the test?

Q12: How can I find out more about what the MEAP tests assess?

A12: Information about the MEAP tests can be obtained at the OSE/EIS website at: www.mde.state.mi.us/off/sped, Quick Links, "assessment- accommodations–meap–alternate" or at the Merit Award program website: www.meritaward.state.mi.us/

Q13: What is an assessment accommodation?

A13: The goal of an assessment accommodation is to minimize the impact of the student's disability on his/her performance on the assessment. It should give a student with a disability an equal opportunity, NOT give the student an unfair advantage over other students.

Q14: What might an IEP team consider when discussing assessment accommodations?

A14: Some questions the IEP team may address related to assessment accommodations are:

1. What are the assessment accommodation guidelines for the specific test the IEP Team is addressing?
2. Is the assessment accommodation used routinely by the student in the classroom?
3. Does it minimize the impact of the student's disability?
4. Does it give the student with a disability an advantage over other students?
5. Does it change what the test is designed to measure?
6. Does it threaten test security or the integrity of the test?

Q15: What accommodations are considered standard and non-standard for the MEAP tests.

A15: Accommodation decisions should be made on an individual, case-by-case basis. For students who are eligible for special education, the IEP team should consider accommodations that may be necessary. Selection of an accommodation should be based on the accommodations relative appropriateness to a disability and to its impact on the student. It is very important that the IEP team make all decisions well in advance of testing. Accommodation information in the IEP must be specific to each MEAP test subject.

The federal government has determined that state and local agencies cannot constrain an IEP team's decision about accommodations. However, the state has the authority to make decisions regarding the use of scores received under accommodated conditions (see figure 1 on page 9).

For more information, contact:
Peggy Dutcher, Michigan Department of Education
Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services
P.O. Box 30008, Lansing, MI 48909
(517) 373-0923, 373-7504 fax
dutcherp@michigan.gov

All Students Achieve Program-Summer School Program (ASAP-SSP) Offers a Wide Variety of Experiences

Faith Stevens, Consultant, English Language Arts, Michigan Department of Education

The All Students Achieve Program Summer School Program (ASAP-SSP), funded by Section 32g of PA 297 of 2000 legislation, required schools to offer 60 hours of instruction in reading and math to students who were not performing at grade level in school. One-hundred-fifty-three sites were originally funded for summer school programs. Some sites included multiple districts together as one group. Michigan had 229 districts and public school academies offering summer school experiences to their students as part of the ASAP-SSP program.

A wide variety of experiences were offered to students who attend summer school, primarily in the mornings for six weeks out of their summer. Research has found the following factors have the greatest impact on student success:

- Lower ratio of teachers to students (recommended: one adult for each 10 students),
- Good attendance,
- Parents who are supportive at home and involved in the program,
- Teachers who use assessment to plan for instruction that fits the needs of the student, and
- Coordination between the summer school program and the regular school year program.

The lower teacher-student ratio allowed the teacher more time to work with individual students, to assess frequently, and to plan for each student's instruction. More than 1,000 students with disabilities participated in ASAP-SSP programs. Each site will be evaluating the effectiveness of its summer school programs and looking at factors that have been most helpful.

For more information, contact:
Faith Stevens, Consultant
English Language Arts, Michigan Department of Education
(517) 241-2479, stevensf@state.mi.us

Teacher Perspective

Collaborative Teaching Improves Special Education Delivery and Assessment at Lansing's Gardner Middle School

Jennifer Rogers, Contributing Writer

Cathy Powell and Laura Colligan are two educators who believe in student achievement, and they've committed themselves to see that it happens. Colligan and Powell believe that student achievement can be improved when teachers work collaboratively.

Both special education teachers, Powell and Colligan worked together at Gardner Middle School in Lansing, Michigan until recently when Colligan moved to Washington Woods Middle School in Holt. During the 2000-2001 school year at Gardner, Powell and Colligan proposed a collaborative program to provide a wider range of educational services for students with special needs. The idea put two special education teachers on one sixth-grade general education team. This allowed one teacher to be available in the inclusive classroom setting and the other could provide specialized classroom services as needed.

Cathy Powell, a special education teacher at Gardner Middle School in Lansing, assists a student in a team-taught, inclusive language arts classroom.

Powell and Colligan created their unique service delivery model in response to low student achievement in the traditional inclusive classroom setting. The model provides more options for meeting the academic, social, and emotional needs of students receiving special education services. Having two special education teachers on one team allows for a broader approach to service delivery for students with special needs. With this team model, a co-teaching inclusion option, a full inclusion option, and a small pull-out option are all available, depending on student needs.

"We wanted this program to look at the 'whole child,' meaning the child's social, emotional, and academic well-being," Powell said. "We have students with very diverse backgrounds, and we were determined to find a way to blend them all together. We decided to parallel our special education curriculum with the general education curriculum so that students could learn and be exposed to the same material."

Powell and Colligan combined their student caseload for math and science. Co-teaching these classes, they realized that by combining their resources, ideas, and manpower, they were more successful teachers. The combined classes looked more like general education classrooms, and students felt less excluded from the general education setting while still receiving specialized services.

In order for any educational program to be successful, administrative support is a must. "We received strong backing from our administration and from parents of students in the program," Powell and Colligan said.

According to Powell and Colligan, parents make special requests for their children to be placed on the team. "This model allows for inclusion with special education students participating in the general education setting."

"The outcomes of our collaborative teaching are fantastic," said Powell. "We benefit from collaboration, shared materials, and shared teaching strategies. The program also improves student self-esteem, behavior, and academic growth." Powell and Colligan measure the success of the program by individual and overall student achievement.

"The initial response from general education teachers was concern that the number of special education students on their team would double," Powell and Colligan said. "Their fear was that each special education teacher would bring a caseload of students to the team. When we explained that the students who were not being successful in the co-taught classes would be moved to another classroom setting, general education teachers were more accepting of the idea."

"At the beginning of the program, inclusion within the general education setting, with a special education teacher on the team, was the only option offered," Powell said. "At that time, we had four to six students who were failing in the general education classrooms even though materials were adapted, individual help was given, and testing accommodations were used. Some students were still not successful. Their self-esteem was decreasing, and their inappropriate behaviors were increasing."

Laura Colligan (left) and Cathy Powell (right)

According to Powell and Colligan, "When we pulled students who were struggling back into the special education classroom, their self-esteem and behavior improved as they became more successful, contributing students. Some of these students were eventually able to return to the inclusive classroom setting."

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Collaborative Teaching Improves Special Education Delivery and Assessment at Lansing's Gardner Middle School (continued from page 22…)

After it was obvious that the collaborative program worked at the sixth grade level, the seventh and eighth grade teams at Gardner Middle School in Lansing followed suit, according to Powell and Colligan.

The future of this collaborative teaching program is promising. Both Powell and Colligan are presenting their model at state education conferences to help promote the program. Other school districts have even visited Gardner Middle School to see the program first-hand in hopes of implementing it in their district.

"When we first started working together and finally began to learn together, we never dreamed about the positive results we would get from our students," said Powell and Colligan. They continued their efforts and got involved in Gardner Middle School's school improvement team. The teaching duo was voted onto the team and served as co-chairpersons for the 1999-2001 school year. The school improvement team looks directly at student achievement and ways to improve student performance on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP).

Meanwhile, the Lansing School District was in the process of realigning the general education curriculum to better meet the standards and benchmarks endorsed by the Michigan State Board of Education. These standards and benchmarks are presented in the *Michigan Curriculum Framework* published by the Michigan Department of Education (see "Instruction and Assessment Should Be Tightly Aligned and Interwoven," page 16). While working on the curriculum alignment, a team of teachers, including special education teachers, developed quarterly assessments to check students' progress. Powell was involved in the assessment development and implementation in the area of language arts, and Colligan worked in the areas of science and social studies.

"We were very excited about this opportunity to better align our curriculum with the standards and benchmarks," Powell said. Powell and Colligan noted that state standards and MEAP scores assess student learning, but informal assessments and hands-on experiences are the true benchmarks of learning. "Participating in the district realignment was a great opportunity for us to track our own students' progress and offer our students a better chance to do well on all the standardized tests given by the state and district."

"Testing is dominating education these days, but the positive results we experienced are rewarding," said Powell and Colligan. "Self-esteem and confidence are extremely important for all students. Some of the same students who were in pull-out programs for most of their educational experiences were now in a classroom with 20 other students working on the same curriculum as general education students."

"The positive effects can be seen on the faces of students," said Powell and Colligan. "Students are excited to come to class and many students are being exposed to materials for the first time. All of Powell and Colligan's sixth grade science students studied the human body with an emphasis on the circulatory system. Each student was given a quarterly assessment and many scored in the satisfactory range. The scores encouraged students, teachers, and parents.

Special education teacher Kathy Powell, above, conferences with a student in a sixth grade language arts classroom while general education teacher Becky Kennedy (left) works with another student in the same classroom. Both educators and students are pleased with the results of this collaborative effort.

For more information, contact:
Kathy Powell
Gardner Middle School
333 Dahlia Dr., Lansing, MI 48911
(517) 325-6540 or
Laura Colligan
Washington Woods Middle School
2055 Washington, Holt, MI 48842
(517) 699-0250

Advantages of Co-Teaching

For General Education Teacher:

- Flexibility
- More time for sharing learning and teaching strategies
- More focus on content and less on behavior problems
- Two role models for acceptable, productive behavior
- Twice as much teacher assistance

For Special Education Teacher:

- More opportunities to use specialized skills
- Become familiar with general education curriculum
- Knowledge of the daily expectations of the general education teachers on assignments
- Intrinsically rewarding to see students succeed and establish credibility among their peers
- Moral support from a fellow colleague/friend

For Special Education Student:

- Improved self-esteem
- Allowed to grow and learn in the least restrictive environment
- Improved citizenship
- Exposure to students with appropriate behaviors and successful learning skills
- Become contributing members of the general education population

Source: Cathy Powell and Laura Colligan

Quality Assurance Review (QAR) Pilot Continues

Effort Aims to Improve the Performance of Students with Disabilities

Kathy Bradford, Consultant, Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services

What Is the QAR?

The Quality Assurance Review (QAR) is about the quality of learning for students with disabilities. The process goes beyond state monitoring and compliance procedures and asks the tough question, "Are students with disabilities really learning and how do we know?" The QAR is a continuous improvement process designed for schools to use data-based decision making to improve the performance of students with disabilities. It is not a parallel process or a current popular initiative. The QAR is designed to align with the school's current improvement plan; it is schoolwide and is based on valid research.

The QAR process is based on standards. The content standards and benchmarks of the *Michigan Curriculum Framework* are the universal standards for ALL students learning in Michigan. These standards are the basis for all student curriculua. The QAR is completely aligned with the state standards and all state and federal programs. The *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA), Michigan's State Board of Education priorities, Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services (OSE/EIS) goals, Michigan's school improvement legislation, and the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (Title I) support the QAR.

Where Is the QAR Implemented?

The QAR is implemented at the classroom, school, and district levels. It is a systemic improvement process designed as a cycle with eight components:

- Gather multi-source data
- Implement the QAR self-assessment
- Analyze data results
- Identify additional data
- Plan for improvement
- Develop goals
- Implement goals in an action plan
- Report to the public

Why Do We Need to Implement the QAR?

Federal and state legislation require that students with disabilities are accessing and participating in the general education curriculum and participating in the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) or alternate assessments (MI-Access). The QAR provides an accountability model for learning by students with disabilities. As demands for accountability at the state and federal level continue to increase, it is essential that classrooms, schools, and districts collect evidence of actual student learning. Our students, their parents, and our communities need to know that schools have the data upon which to make decisions about improving their students' learning. Actualizing accountability will happen through the QAR implementation. Data is gathered and analyzed using real assessment results (data) to determine goals for improvement. Personnel development related to the implementation of QAR will prepare every person in the education system to use multi-source data, including student assessment results, to determine if students with disabilities are continuously improving.

Who Does the QAR?

A core team includes six people from the school: a school principal/administrator; a parent of a student with disabilities; two general education teachers; and two special education staff member, one who is a full-time teacher in the building. At least one of the members of the QAR core team is already a member of the school improvement team. However, all school staff and parents participate in the QAR at the classroom, school, and district levels. They need to know and have a common understanding of the QAR right at the beginning of implementation and throughout the process. The district special education director, curriculum director, and the intermediate school district (ISD) school improvement facilitator are critical partners to effectively use the QAR to improve the performance of students with disabilities throughout the system. To ensure the success of the QAR, the improvement process needs administra-

Continued on page 25...

Quality Assurance Review (QAR) Pilot Continues (continued from page 24…)

tive representation and support from the local school and district levels and the intermediate school district level.

Where Do We Implement the QAR?

It is recommended that the QAR be implemented at the school level with district resources provided to support the process. A school can begin at any place on the QAR cycle. However, beginning with component #1 of the QAR cycle: "Gather Multi-Source Data" and working sequentially through all eight components is highly recommended to sustain the continuous improvement process. Staff will gather, analyze, and evaluate the results of multi-source data that is currently being used at the classroom, school, and district levels for all students in all education settings.

When Do We Implement the QAR?

Now. Don't wait. Bring your staff together and review the QAR process. Use the introductory video (see contact information below) with the companion papers to introduce your staff to the QAR pilot study schools and their impression of the process. Invite your district curriculum director, special education director, Title I director, and ISD school improvement facilitator to dialogue about the value of using the QAR as an improvement process to support existing school improvement efforts at the school and district levels. When your school implements the QAR, your school will learn how to use the performance assessment data from ALL students as well as other multi-source data and the school's existing improvement process to improve student performance.

Do We Need Additional Information to Do QAR?

Yes, you will need the QAR process cycle and components, the QAR Self-Assessment Indicators and Rubric Evaluation, the District Data Profile, and several recommended templates for planning and evaluating the school's and district's progress. The *QAR Implementation Manual* will be available upon request from the OSE/EIS. The manual includes: an historical perspective of Michigan's QAR; the QAR cycle preparation implementation and evaluation of the eight components of the QAR; additional resources and templates; QAR Self-Assessment Indicators and Rubric Evaluation; the District Data Profile; and Bibliography. *The QAR Resource Manual* is also available at the Michigan Department of Education website at: www.mde.state.mi.us. In addition, awareness level training on the QAR is available for parents through the OSE/EIS, school staff, administration, and ISD personnel.

The above graphic is a representation of the Michigan Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services Quality Assurance Review (QAR) Process.

Six school sites participated in a Quality Assurance Review (QAR) Process for Special Education learning retreat held at the Brook Lodge in Augusta, Michigan last October. The topic of the retreat was, "What, Where, How, and Why? What Have We learned? Are We Improving the Performance of Students with Disabilities?" The participating schools included: Navigator School in Pinckney, Pattengill Elementary School in Berkley, Townsend Elementary School in Vandercook Lake, Winchell Elementary School in Kalamazoo, Parkside Elementary School in Rockford, and Sparta Middle School in Sparta. Each school sent a team consisting of a parent, general education teacher, special education teacher, school social worker, counselor, and/or administrator.

For more information, contact:
Kathy Bradford, Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services
P.O. Box 30008, Lansing, MI 48909
(517) 373-0926, 373-7504 fax
BradfordK@gov.mi.us or
Esther VanDyke, (517) 335-0445

Including Students with Disabilities in Assessments Is Critical for Improving Opportunities (continued from page 5…)

Making Sure the Test Is Valid

Numerous measurement issues arise when discussing standardized testing and testing accommodations. The issue becomes even more confusing when you consider the fact that accommodations are often suited to the needs of individual students, so accommodations may differ for different students taking the same test. The lack of standardized and uniform administration procedures endangers the reliability of a test and could invalidate the interpretation of the student's scores. Therefore, when thinking about validity, you should keep four points in mind:

- Validity is concerned with the question, "To what extent will this assessment information or test score help me make an appropriate decision?"
- Validity refers to the decisions that are made from assessment information, not the assessment approach or the test itself.
- Validity is a matter of degree. Think of validity in terms of highly valid, moderately valid, and invalid.
- Validity involves an overall evaluative judgment. It requires evaluation of the degree to which interpretations and uses of assessment results are justified by supporting evidence and in terms of the consequences of those interpretations and issues.

Making Accommodation Decisions

Accommodations generally result in some minor changes in the administration or response procedures. The keys to the selection and appropriate use of testing accommodations are three-fold:

- Accommodations must be determined on a case-by-case basis for each student.
- Knowledge of the instructional accommodations a student currently receives should guide considerations of testing accommodations.
- Accommodations are intended to make the test a more accurate measure of what a student knows or can do. In effect, accommodations should increase the validity of a student's test score.

If you have a clear understanding of what a test measures, many of the decisions about the appropriate accommodations become rather straightforward. For example, reading questions and answers on a test designed to measure sight vocabulary and comprehension would certainly invalidate the resulting score, because these accommodations change the skills or competencies the test is designed to measure. Conversely, reading a complex story problem on a test designed to measure mathematics reasoning and calculation could be appropriate for some students with disabilities. In this latter case, reading assistance is designed to increase the likelihood that the test score is a better indicator of what the student has learned in mathematics.

Not all students with disabilities will need testing accommodations to participate in assessment and provide a valid or accurate account of their abilities. For a small number of students with more severe disabilities, testing accommodations will not be appropriate or reasonable. Students in this situation will need to participate in an alternate assessment to meaningfully measure their abilities and provide valid results.

Stephen Elliott is a professor at the University of Wisconsin Madison, and an instructor in the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) online learning program, Assessing One and All: Educational Accountability for Students with Disabilities. *The Web course,* Assessing One and All: Educational Accountability for Students with Disabilities, *helps educators comply with* IDEA *1997 regulations. This course will help educators understand these requirements and develop testing programs that meet federal and state mandates for inclusion, accommodation, and alternate assessment.*

For more information or to register for the course, see the CEC website at www.cec.sped.org

Arm Students with Test-Taking Strategies to Reduce Anxiety (continued from page 5…)

visual cue. Also, teachers should write in bold or underline key points or concepts to be retrieved.

On multiple choice tests, instructions should modify or eliminate redundant, unnecessary, or confusing options and reduce the number of answer choices.

Educators can decrease test-taking stress for students by using typewritten rather than handwritten papers. Other helpful techniques include leaving space on the test paper for responses, defining unfamiliar vocabulary, providing extra time, and allowing students to dictate responses.

For standardized tests, educators can help students by working with them on:

- Filling in the appropriate bubble—"quick, dark, and inside the line."
- Transferring answers from the booklet to the answer sheet.
- Making a guess rather than leaving an item blank.
- Using elimination strategies.
- Using time wisely.

Program self-study packets (including written materials and an audiotape of the presentation) will be available from the Council for Exceptional Children.

For more information, contact: (888) 232-7733, conteduc@cec.sped.org

Guest Editor (continued from page 3…)

Medicine for nine years. She then joined Michigan Department of Education's (MDE) Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP). After 14 years with the MEAP, Peggy now works in the Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services (OSE/EIS), providing leadership in the area of assessment. She is the MI-Access Project Director and has directed the development of Michigan's alternate assessment. Peggy also functions as the OSE/EIS liaison to the MEAP on issues related to the participation of students with disabilities in the MEAP. The immediate challenge for Peggy is the development and implementation of MI-Access, Michigan's Alternate Assessment Program for students for whom the individualized education program (IEP) team determines MEAP, or MEAP with assessment accommodations, is not appropriate.

Better Understanding Leads to More Accurate Interpretation of Test Scores

Holly Spence Sasso, Editor

Michigan's students might be criticized too harshly when it comes to score evaluations from the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP), according to Ernest A. Bauer, Research, Evaluation, and Assessment Consultant for Oakland Schools. Bauer says, "When you look at the history of the MEAP, Michigan students are really doing pretty well. What's happened is that we've raised our standards, and when we raise our standards scores go down."

Bauer spoke to teachers, parents, and administrators at the Quality Assurance Review (QAR) learning retreat held in Augusta, Michigan last October (see "Quality Assurance Review Pilot Continues," page 24). "Don't let the statistics get you down," Bauer said. "There is very little positive information actually reported about how kids actually do on MEAP tests. What we see is how many kids hit the 'magic' numbers, how many kids are above average."

Scores Often Get Interpreted As All or None

According to Bauer, it takes more than one statistic to determine how a student does on a test. "A statistic can be graphed in a variety of ways and the results give a variety of information. Parents should have access to different charts and graphs to help them interpret their child's scores more accurately," Bauer says. "It's often the case that state and district level scores get interpreted as 'all or none.'"

Bauer says that parents shouldn't base their interpretations on scores alone. "When comparing students using just one statistic, there tends to be a big discrepancy in the results. Don't let the statistics get you down," Bauer says. "Ask how the student is actually doing on the tests and what the test was actually testing. Look at the standards and benchmarks set by the *Michigan Curriculum Framework* and go to the itemized questions. Determine what is being asked and attempt to describe the thinking involved in solving that problem or answering that question. Determine what it really means to do this problem."

All Faculty Members Should Be Involved in Test Results Analysis

Ernest A. Bauer

Bauer suggests that educators, schools, districts, and parents focus on a metacognative view of the questions asked. This means trying to understand the thought process involved in answering a given question. "Once that understanding is reached, you can begin to look for patterns and pool information that will lead to a better understanding of what needs to be taught so students will have a better understanding of how to answer the problem question."

Bauer suggests that even though an entire school faculty doesn't always participate in a state test assessment, all members should be involved in the test results analysis. "If enough of the faculty members understand the areas where students are having difficulty on state assessments," Bauer says, "more teaching can be focused on those areas and results can be drastically improved."

For more information, contact:
Ernest A. Bauer, Consultant
Research, Evaluation, and Assessment
Oakland Schools
2100 Pontiac Lake Rd., Waterford, MI 48328-2735
(248) 209-2162, 209-2207 fax
ernie.bauer@oakland.k12.mi.us
www.oakland.k12.mi.us

Common Reasons Some Students Don't Do Well on Some Test Items:

Curriculum Issues:

1. The concept tested is not in the curriculum.
2. The concept tested is in the curriculum but it is not taught.
3. The concept is in the curriculum but the vocabulary is different.
4. The concept is assessed in a way with which students are not familiar.

Test Taking/Thinking Skills Issues:

1. The item requires a kind of thinking with which students are not familiar.
2. Students select answers that are supporting details when they are asked "big picture" (main idea) questions.
3. Students select answers because the distracter is true, but it is not the answer to the question at hand.
4. Students answer questions using their own experience as a frame of reference rather than accepting the authority of the text presented in the test.

Constructed Response Items:

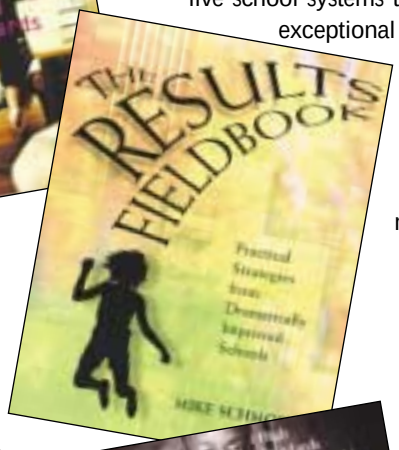
1. Students don't do all the items required, e.g. they give an example, but don't explain or compare (or whatever else the task required).
2. Students argue both sides of an issue rather than clearly supporting a position.
3. Students aren't accustomed to actually using/critiquing inquiry methods.
4. Students use pronouns without clear antecedents.

Source: Ernest A. Bauer

Resources

Educational Leadership, published through the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, presents a variety of viewpoints about standards based education in the Volume 59, Number 1, September 2001 issue titled, "Making Standards Work." The publication looks at what is being done and what remains to be done to realize "the promise of standards." Thomas R. Gusky, featured on page 12-13 of this issue of *Newsline*, is also featured in the September 2001 issue of *Educational Leadership* with an article titled, "Helping Standards Make the Grade." The article focuses on how criterion-based assessments are alleviating the necessity for relying solely on high-stakes tests.

For more information or to order copies of this publication, contact:
ASCD Information Services
1703 N. Beauregard St.
Alexandria, VA 22311-1714
(800) 933-2723, www.ascd.org



The Results Fieldbook, Practical Strategies from Dramatically Improved Schools by Mike Schmoker, a school improvement consultant from Flagstaff, Arizona, and published through the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) answers questions based on five school systems that overcame obstacles and achieved exceptional results. Questions addressed include, how do you measure school improvement, and how can simple tools—already at your fingertips—work more effectively to improve student achievement in reading, math, and more.

For more information or to order copies of this publication, contact:
ASCD Information Services
1703 N. Beauregard St.
Alexandria, VA 22311-1714
(800) 933-2723, www.ascd.org

The Truth about Testing, An Educator's Call to Action by W. James Popham explores the serious destructive consequences of today's testing programs. Popham insists it's up to educators to take the first step out of "this measurement mess." The author appeals to educators to build their own assessment literacy, spread the word about harmful testing, and reexamine how they use test data in the classroom. The book includes advice for distinguishing between sound and unsound large-scale tests, guidelines to help teachers maximize the instructional benefits that properly constructed classroom tests can bring, and evidence-gathering strategies for teachers and administrators trying to "survive and thrive" in an accountability-driven environment.

For more information or to order copies of this publication, contact:
ASCD Information Services
1703 N. Beauregard St., Alexandria, VA 22311-1714
(800) 933-2723, www.ascd.org

Achieving & Succeeding is published through the Michigan Department of Education, Office of School Excellence. This brochure describes the relationship between high academic standards and the future success of Michigan students. It provides an overview of Michigan standards in English language arts, mathematics, social sciences, and science.

For more information or to order copies of this publication, contact:
Central Michigan University
Educational Materials Center
139 CSB, Mt. Pleasant, MI 48859
(989) 774-3943, 774-3954 fax

Explore the Web for Information about Standards

- The MiddleWeb Guide to Standards-Based School Reform Resources at www.middleweb.com/SBRGuide.html houses a collection of stories, research articles, databases, and useful websites for schools committed to higher standards.
- The Center for Education Reform at www.edreform.com/index.html provides updates on reform initiatives, newsletters, and forums for discussing reform analysis. Scroll down to Getting Connected (on the left), and then select Standards/Curriculum from the menu for additional information on standards.
- The MarcoPolo Program at marcopolo.worldcom.com features no-cost standards-based Internet content for the K-12 teacher and classroom.
- Concept to Classroom at www.thirteen.org contains free online workshops from WNET and the Disney Learning Partnership that allow participants to explore several educational philosophies and strategies, including Teaching to Academic Standards.
- Subscribe to a discussion list that focuses on issues related to educational assessment in grades K-12. Visit ericae.net/k12assess/.

People Who Make a Difference

Early On® Coordinator Receives Scandary Award

Shirley A. Beckman, Writer

Deb Lowery Booher believes children with special needs should have a partnership team of parents and professionals working for them. She has devoted her professional life to creating those partnerships.

Booher was the 2001-2002 winner of the Jane Scandary Award for Excellence in Early Childhood Education. The award is presented annually to an outstanding professional who has made a significant contribution to young children and their families. Deb's experience includes co-chairing the Wexford-Missaukee Intermediate School District (ISD) *Early On*® Interagency Coordinating Council since 1989. She was a teacher of young children with preprimary impairment and is currently a preschool coordinator and Child Find coordinator for Wexford-Missaukee ISD.

Karen Mlcek, director of general education for Wexford-Missaukee ISD, describes Booher as a quality educator. "Deb has listened to the local school districts in their need for information," Mlcek says. "Deb also helps make the ISD aware of families and students coming to the district. She has set up a tremendous support system for young families transitioning to the K-12 school network."

Booher believes that parents and professionals bring equal amounts of information to the table. She tells parents that no one knows their child better than they do, and she tells professionals to listen to the parents.

Nowhere is this demonstrated more firmly than in the Transdisciplinary Play-Based Assessment (TPBA) the ISD uses to evaluate children from birth to three years of age. "This is a family-centered evaluation and the family is critical," Booher said.

The parent and child enter the playroom, and, when the child is comfortable, Booher explains the process to the parent. The play facilitator plays with the child, and then the parent plays with the child. The parent is asked if what is happening is typical of the way the child plays at home. The play is recorded with a video camera. Booher writes her evaluation after reviewing the video.

A planning meeting is scheduled for presenting the written report, with recommendations to the parents. The report is explained, and questions are answered.

"This [TPBA] is the first point on the graph of the child's development," Booher said. She is careful to explain to the parents that she does not predict what the child's future will be, though a prediction is what parents often ask for. The report informs the parents where their child is now.

"It pleases me that most families leave the preschool program equipped to advocate for their children," Booher said. "They leave feeling like equal partners at any table. Families know how to advocate."

Booher provides a link for children, their families, the local schools, and community resources. She has helped develop this link through her active role in the community. She is a founding member of the ISD's Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN) team and is involved in the district's Child Protection Council.

Booher is part of Project Christmas, an annual community effort to see that every child in Wexford County has a gift personally selected by a parent. She helped found the local hospice and worked as a volunteer trainer for hospice. Her expertise is training adults to work with children who are grieving. She has been a member of Strong Families/Safe Children. On a personal level, Booher is active in her church and has acted in the capacity of a foster parent.

Deb Lowery Booher

Speaking of the community-family collaboration, Booher said, "In this community, what makes this work is that the relationships between families and service providers last a long time. Long-lasting relationships make it really easy."

When nominating Lowery for the Scandary award, Daryl Petterson, a Wexford-Missaukee ISD colleague wrote, "Deb's wealth of experience in collaborative partnerships, her commitment to equal partnerships with parents and agencies, her ability to listen and communicate with others, and her strong personal commitment for services for others have provided essentials for leadership in our community and make her a most deserving candidate for this award."

For more information, contact:
Deb Lowery Booher
***Early On*® Coordinator, Wexford-Missaukee Intermediate School District**
9905 E. 13th St., Cadillac, MI 49601
(231) 876-2295, 876-1307 fax

Resource Center Links Families to Education Information

Activities for helping children learn while at home, tips for planning ahead for college, and steps toward becoming more involved in neighborhood schools are among a number of resources parents and caregivers can access through the Information Resource Center (IRC) at the U.S. Department of Education.

A central entry point into the department, the IRC links families, schools, and communities to information on student learning and provides updates on department programs, funding opportunities, teleconferences, and other events.

The IRC is staffed by specialists with expertise in various fields of education who can provide assistance or contacts for:

- Programs and initiatives that center on the President's and Secretary's priorities;
- Popular grant programs;
- Free publications and materials, available directly from the Department's publication center;
- Teleconferences and events, such as the monthly Satellite Town Meeting;
- Referrals to additional education information and services and; and
- Direct assistance for finding a person or office in the department.

For more information, contact:
Information Resource Center
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20202-0498
(800) USA-LEARN (872-5327)
usa_learn@ed.gov
www.ed.gov/offices/OIIA/IRC

Michigan's Revised Administrative Rules for Special Education Are Under Review

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Watkins Listens to Concerns

Holly Spence Sasso, Editor

In March 2001, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) released a draft of the proposed rule changes for special education. Public comment began March 5, 2001 and concluded on October 1, 2001. During that time period, the MDE held 18 public hearings across the state regarding the proposed rules.

MDE staff is currently analyzing the comments MDE has received and anticipates presenting a revised rule package by February 2002. According to MDE spokespersons, the MDE has three options for each of the proposed rules: 1) retain the current administrative rule; 2) proceed with the proposal as written; or 3) revise the wording in the proposed rule, taking public comment into account, as long as the changes do not alter the intent of what was proposed.

In an effort to hear for himself the concerns of parents, teachers, and others about the new proposed administrative rules for special education, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Watkins attended a series of five Listen and Learn sessions around the state. Sessions were held November 1 at Okemos High School, November 6 at Macomb County Intermediate School District (ISD), November 13 at Kent County ISD; November 19 at Novi Instructional Technology Center, and November 20 at the Northwest Activities Center in Detroit.

"I'm doing this so that when I am sitting down and making decisions, I can think about how my decisions are going to affect real people," Watkins explained. "I want to make sure that when we go about making changes, I can remember those faces."

Once a final rules package is developed, the administrative rules process requires Superintendent Watkins to submit the rules package to the Office of Regulatory Reform and the Legislative Service Bureau for approval. The rules are then submitted to the Legislature's Joint Committee on Administrative Rules for review. Unless a majority of Joint Committee members object to the rules within 21 calendar days, the rules will be filed with the Secretary of State and officially published.

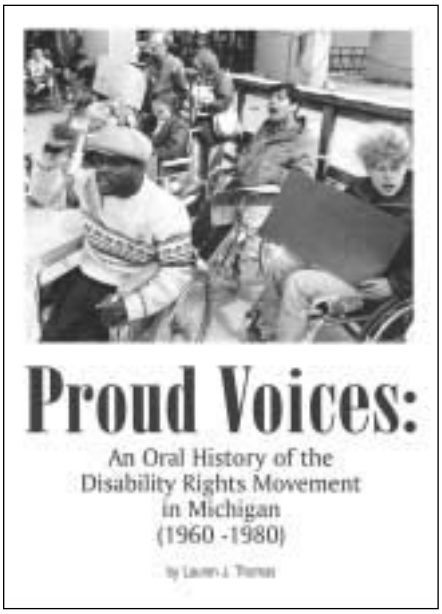
Tom Watkins, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, above, center and below, standing at right, speaks to parents, educators, and other special education stakeholders in Okemos, MI on November 1, 2001.

For more information about the Listen and Learn Sessions, contact:
T.J. Bucholtz, Coordinator of Communications Outreach
Michigan Department of Education
(517) 241-4395 or
visit the MDE website at
www.mde.state.us/off/sped

Editor's Note: A portion of this article was adapted with permission from School Law Notes, October 25, 2001, a client newsletter prepared by Thrun, Maatsch, and Nordberg, P.C. For more information about this publication, contact: P.O. Box 40699, Lansing, MI 48901-7899, (517) 484-8000.

Proud Voices Recalls a Small but Important Group of Individuals and Their Efforts

Shirley A. Beckman, Writer



Proud Voices: An Oral History of the Disability Rights Movement in Michigan (1960-1980) is a slender but important volume that tells the story, in their own words, of a small group of people who helped write and pass legislation that protects the rights of people with disabilities.

These are the people who blazed the trail so students with disabilities would have access to higher education. Their efforts resulted in barrier-free public buildings, curb cuts, sports opportunities for people with disabilities, and the growth of centers for independent living. Their work changed the way people with disabilities think about themselves.

Proud Voices was researched and written by Lauren J. Thomas of Lansing, with grants from the Michigan Humanities Council, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Kate and Richard Wolters Foundation. The tapes and transcripts of Thomas's interviews are housed at the Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Thomas was determined that this history would be told in the voices of the people who lived it. As she said early in the project, "If these memories were not captured now, someday, the history would be written in the voices of others." She interviewed 19 people for the book.

"I could not possibly listen to all the voices," Thomas writes in the final pages of the book. "These leaders cleared the first hurdles—removing architectural barriers, protecting civil rights, and founding advocacy organizations. Some of these leaders were uncompromising truth tellers. Some of them possessed a unique political savvy. Some shattered myths of helplessness. Still others silently worked behind the scenes, preferring to avoid the heat and light of controversy. No matter who they were, we are heirs to the movement to which they all gave birth. When we stop long enough to hear these proud voices, we find inspiration and hope for the journey ahead."

Thomas said the book has had a ripple effect "like a stone thrown into a lake." Since the book was published, Thomas has been giving talks to groups around the state. She hopes to be able to speak to school groups, students, and educators.

For more information or to order a copy of the book, contact: Lauren Thomas, (517) 699-8505, LT9956@aol.com

TestWiz Assists Educators in Managing Assessment Data

TestWiz is a Windows-based product designed to track and report on student test scores. TestWiz is free to Michigan schools and enables users to print numerous reports at individual student, classroom, school, and district levels. There are objective-level (strand-level) reports and item-level reports.

Each report can be customized so that users can look at only the data that interests them at the moment. MacIntosh users can run TestWiz using Virtual PC on any G3Apple computer.

The latest version of TestWiz 7.0 is available for free download at www.testwiz.com. Click on "TestWiz: Michigan" and then on software for installation and instructions. An updated version of the "software" will be available on the TestWiz website as soon as Spring 2001 Michigan high school results are released. Until then, TestWiz version 7.0 should be used to work with Winter 2001 fourth-, fifth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) data.

Beginning this year, Michigan will pay for all school districts to receive their MEAP data on CD-ROM—now everyone will be able to use TestWiz completely free of charge. TestWiz reports will also include national state averages on assessments after many TestWiz users requested this enhancement.

Back by popular demand, the MEAP office is arranging free, half-day TestWiz training sessions at local intermediate school districts. The training sessions will take place in a computer lab already equipped with the TestWiz software. Participants must bring their data disks or CD-ROM. The training will be very relevant because participants will be working with their data, learning how to generate reports and use them.

For more information or to arrange training, contact:
Mary Jo Rasmussen, (734) 747-9533
mjrasmus@mediaone.net

For assistance with TestWiz software contact: (877) 456-8949

Long-Time Special Education Teacher and Advocate Joins the MI-Access Team

Frank McClelland

Frank McClelland has accepted the position of Special Education Consultant to the MI-Access project. Frank first taught junior and senior high school. Then, after five years, he moved to special education and taught students with trainable mental impairments (TMI) for twenty-six years. Frank also worked as a staff trainer and school improvement chairperson and served as a teacher representative on various school district committees.

During the development of the MI-Access, Frank served as an AUEN (Addressing Unique Educational Needs) trainer and as a member of the Content Advisory Committee, the Activity Development Team, and the Alternate Assessment Advisory Committee. He also helped to edit, format, and proof the MI-Access assessment activities and various sections for the MI-Access manuals in addition to providing input on many other aspects of the project.

As a member of the MI-Access team, Frank will be active in the development and implementation of Michigan's alternate assessment and responsible for a variety of tasks, including planning, developing, and facilitating regional training workshops. The workshops will explore different strategies and tools, including the AUEN, that can assist students with disabilities to gain access to and progress in the general curriculum.

For more information or to contact Frank McClelland, contact:
Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services
P.O. Box 30008, Lansing, MI 48909
(517) 335-0477, 373-7504 fax
mcclellandf@michigan.gov

A RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

- Emphasize what the child does right by marking the number of correct answers, not the number of wrong answers.
- Help each child understand the value of individual differences. We are not all born with the same gifts. Each child is unique and has something to contribute. Therefore, display samples of every child's best work so that if a visitor is in the room each child can say, "Look at my paper/picture/name!"
- Foster good conduct by writing notes home to parents complimenting the child's good behavior and work instead of contacting them only when the child has done something wrong.
- Improve the child's self-concept and peer image by finding ways to build up the children others are putting down.
- Help all children see that teachers are their friends. Make it a point to say something warm and friendly to each child each day or week.
- Foster love of learning. This will never happen if the very subject we are striving to teach is also used as punishment.
- Allow children to experience success and failure with dignity. Keep in mind that it is often as important to reward trying as achieving.
- Treat each child fairly—not equally. Equality is unfair when we fail to recognize the varying abilities of each child.

Source: Schools Without Failure *by William Glasser*

CEN
Newsline
Eaton ISD
1790 E. Packard Hwy
Charlotte, MI 48813

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Events by Date

Editor's Note: Upcoming Events are uploaded regularly to the Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services website. You can access events information at the website (see footnote) or wait until events are published in Newsline. *You can upload events to the website yourself or continue to submit them to* Newsline. *Events should be submitted two months prior to* Newsline *publication.*

DECEMBER 1, 2001

"Yesterday's Tomorrows: Transportation of Tomorrow Exhibit"

Sponsor: Michigan Humanitites Council
Location: Leelanau Historical Museum
Leeland, MI
☎ Contact: Michigan Humanities Council
(517) 372-7770

DECEMBER 3, 2001

RAFT Support Meeting

Sponsors: United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) of Metro Detroit and The Parent Coalition
Location: Southfield, MI
☎ Contact: Catrina Moye, ucp@ameritech.net
(800) 827-4843 ext. 240

DECEMBER 3, 2001

The New Marketing Boot Camp

Sponsor: Michigan Institute for Educational Management (MIEM)
Location: Holiday Inn West; Livonia, MI
☎ Contact: MIEM, mduffy@admin.melg.org
(517) 327-2589

DECEMBER 4, 2001

Inclusion

Sponsor: United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) of Metro Detroit
Location: Southfield, MI
☎ Contact: Sharon, ucp@ameritech.net
(800) 827-4843 ext. 238

DECEMBER 5, 2001

Positive Behavior Support Awareness Workshop

Sponsors: United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) of Metro Detroit and The Parent Coalition
Location: Southfield, MI
☎ Contact: Catrina Moye, ucp@ameritech.net
(800) 827-4843 ext. 240

DECEMBER 5, 2001

Positive Behavior Support Awareness Workshop

Sponsor: Academy of Southfield
Location: Southfield, MI
Contact:: Simon Perry
(248) 557-6121

DECEMBER 6, 2001

Stress Management

Sponsors: United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) of Metro Detroit and The Parent Coalition
Location: New Beginnings; Detroit, MI
☎ Contact: Catrina Moye, ucp@ameritech.net
(800) 827-4843 ext. 240

DECEMBER 6, 2001

Transition

Sponsors: United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) of Metro Detroit and The Parent Coalition
Location: Southfield, MI
☎ Contact: UCP, ucp@ameritech.net
(800) 827-4843

DECEMBER 7, 2001

Celebrate the Possibilities: The Second Annual Inclusive Education Conference

Sponsor: West Michigan Inclusion Network
Location: Grand Valley State University
Grand Rapids, MI
☎ Contact: Lauri Stein, wmichinclusion@aol.com
(616) 954-9424

DECEMBER 7, 2001

Smooth Sailing When Working with Youngsters Who Stutter or Clutter: New Insights on Treatment

Sponsor: Oakland County Speech, Language, Hearing Association (OCSLHA)
Location: Waterford, MI
☎ Contact: Fran Zakalik
(248) 426-4951

DECEMBER 10, 2001

Writing IEPs and 504 Plans

Sponsors: United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) of Metro Detroit and The Parent Coalition
Location: Southfield, MI
☎ Contact: UCP, ucp@ameritech.net
(800) 827-4843

DECEMBER 10, 2001

Postive Behavior Support Awareness Workshop

Sponsor: Kalamazoo RESA
Location: Kalamazoo, MI
Contact:: Laurie Jefsen
(616) 385-1536

DECEMBER 11, 2001

Discipline Procedures

Sponsors: United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) of Metro Detroit and The Parent Coalition
Location: Family Place; Detroit, MI
☎ Contact: Family Place
(313) 664-0700

DECEMBER 11-12, 2001

Professional Development and General Membership Meeting

Sponsor: Michigan Association of Administrators of Special Education (MAASE)
Location: Sheraton Hotel; Lansing, MI
☎ Contact: Larry Campbell
LLCampbe@remc12.k12.mi.us
(616) 244-5387

DECEMBER 12, 2001

Parent Power/Self-Esteem

Sponsors: United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) of Metro Detroit and Parents Training Parents Project
Location: Livonia Library; Livonia, MI
☎ Contact: Livonia Library
(734) 466-2450

DECEMBER 12, 2001

UCP S.O.S. Support Group

Sponsor: United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) of Metro Detroit
Location: Southfield, MI
☎ Contact: Sharon, ucp@ameritech.net
(800) 827-4843 ext. 238

Events by Date

DECEMBER 13, 2001

State Board of Education Monthly Meeting

Sponsor: State Board of Education
Location: Lansing, MI
☎ Contact: Eileen Hamilton
(517) 373-3900

DECEMBER 13, 2001

Time/Stress Management

Sponsors: United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) of Metro Detroit and The Parent Coalition
Location: Southfield, MI
☎ Contact: Catrina Moye, ucp@ameritech.net
(800) 827-4843 ext. 240

DECEMBER 14, 2001

TSP Workshop: "A Transition Perspective"

Sponsor: Jackson Intermediate School District
Location: Jackson ISD; Jackson, MI
☎ Contact: Jenny Trap
(517) 768-5229

DECEMBER 15, 2001

Michigan Transition Services Association Annual Spring Conference Proposal Deadline

Sponsor: Michigan Transition Services Association
Location: n/a
☎ Contact: Joetta Cherry, jcherry@kresanet.org
(616) 467-5444

DECEMBER 17-19, 2001

Improving America's Schools: No Child Left Behind

Sponsor: The U.S. Department of Education
Location: San Antonio, TX
☎ Contact: Jim Button, James.Button@ed.gov
(800) 203-5494

JANUARY 15, 2002

The New Marketing Boot Camp

Sponsor: Michigan Institute for Educational Management (MIEM)
Location: Holiday Inn West; Kalamazoo, MI
☎ Contact: MIEM, mduffy@admin.melg.org
(517) 327-2589

JANUARY 21-23, 2002

Employers and Educators As Strategic Partners

Sponsor: Michigan Department of Career Development (MDCD)
Location: Amway Grand Plaza Hotel
Grand Rapids, MI
☎ Contact: MDCD, www.mdcd.org
(866) 694-6257

JANUARY 22, 2002

President's Education Forum

Sponsor: Michigan State University (MSU)
Location: East Lansing, MI
☎ Contact: MSU
(517) 355-1735

JANUARY 24, 2002

TSP Workshop: "Student Focused Planning for Transition to Life"

Sponsor: Jackson Intermediate School District
Location: Jackson, MI
☎ Contact: Jenny Trap
(517) 768-5229

FEBRUARY 1, 2002

Working with ESL Students; Speech Pathology Is Not ESL

Sponsor: Oakland County Speech, Language, Hearing Association (OCSLHA)
Location: Oakland Schools; Waterford, MI
☎ Contact: Fran Zakalik
(248) 426-4951

FEBRUARY 11, 2002

MAASE Weekend Seminar

Sponsor: Michigan Association of Administrators of Special Education (MAASE)
Location: Sheraton Hotel; Lansing, MI
☎ Contact: Larry Campbell
(616) 244-5387

FEBRUARY 13-16, 2002

LDA International Conference: Achieving Mile High Goals

Sponsor: Learning Disabilities Association (LDA) of America
Location: Denver, CO
☎ Contact: LDA 2002 Conference
(412) 341-1515

FEBRUARY 19, 2002

President's Education Forum

Sponsor: Michigan State University (MSU)
Location: East Lansing, MI
☎ Contact: MSU
(517) 355-1735

FEBRUARY 25, 2002

The New Marketing Boot Camp

Sponsor: Michigan Institute for Educational Management (MIEM)
Location: Holiday Inn; Traverse City, MI
☎ Contact: MIEM, mduffy@admin.melg.org
(517) 327-2589

FEBRUARY 25, 2002

Positive Behavior Support Awareness Workshop

Sponsor: Allegan ISD
Location: Allegan, MI
Contact:: Amy Boehms
(616) 561-7231

MARCH 1, 2002

Methodologies Used to Treat Children in School and Clinical Settings

Sponsor: Oakland County Speech, Language, Hearing Association (OCSLHA)
Location: Oakland Schools; Waterford, MI
☎ Contact: Fran Zakalik
(248) 426-4951

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- ❒ State Board of Education Member
- ❒ State Discretionary Project staff
- ❒ State Education Agency staff
- ❒ Student
- ❒ Other _____

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Educator Role

- ❒ Agency Contact Person
- ❒ Assistant Director of Sp. Ed.
- ❒ Assistant Principal
- ❒ Building Administrator
- ❒ Building Contact
- ❒ Consultant Corps Member
- ❒ Department Head/Chair
- ❒ Director
- ❒ Director of Special Education
- ❒ *Early On*® Coordinator
- ❒ General Education Teacher
- ❒ ISD Center Program Contact
- ❒ IHE Committee Member
- ❒ LEA Center Program Contact
- ❒ Principal
- ❒ Professor
- ❒ Section 504 Coordinator
- ❒ Special Education Contact
- ❒ Special Education/Teacher
- ❒ Superintendent
- ❒ Supervisor of Special Education
- ❒ Support Staff
- ❒ Other _____

Support Role/Speciality

- ❒ Counselor
- ❒ Curriculum Consultant
- ❒ Curriculum Coordinator
- ❒ Occupational Therapist
- ❒ Orientation and Mobility Specialist
- ❒ Paraprofessional
- ❒ Physical Therapist
- ❒ Psychologist
- ❒ Rehabilitation Consultant
- ❒ Social Worker
- ❒ Speech and Language Pathologist
- ❒ Teacher Consultant
- ❒ Transition Specialist
- ❒ Other _____

_____

Institution Type

- ❒ Alternative Education Facility
- ❒ Charter School/PSA
- ❒ ISD
- ❒ Local District
- ❒ Non-public School
- ❒ Organization
- ❒ Special Education Facility
- ❒ State Institution
- ❒ University
- ❒ Vocational Setting
- ❒ Other _____

_____

Institution Level

- ❒ All
- ❒ Elementary School
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December 2001

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